Ever Yours affectly

J. C. Ibbs.

THE LIFE

OF

FREDERICK JAMES JOBSON, D.D.

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN GREGORY.

WITH THE FUNERAL MEMORIALS OF DR. OSBORN AND DR. POPE.

AND

TEN ORIGINAL SERMONS,

PRINTED FROM DR. JOBSON'S OWN MANUSCRIPTS.

EDITED BY HIS WIDOW,

ELIZABETH JOBSON.

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PREFACE.

MR. GREGORY'S beautiful and affectionate Memoir, which is here republished from the February, March and April numbers of the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* of 1881, together with the kindly and excellent memorials of Dr. Osborn and Dr. Pope, would most fully satisfy my desire as it regards a written monument of my dear husband, were it not for one conviction. Commendatory sentences are all gratifying, especially to those who are left to mourn for the departed one; but if he were a minister of Christ, taking an active and busy share in the affairs of Christ's Church, Christian people who knew him outwardly will have a strong wish to know him inwardly; to know his true spiritual character. 'The shell is admirable,' they will think, 'but what was the kernel? We want to look, if it be possible, into the inmost soul of the man, and learn how far he realised in his own daily experience the religion which he so fervently preached.'

The conviction that such a wish ought so far as possible to be gratified has led me to make a few extracts from my husband's journal, and to add a few feeble remarks of my own. Yet it is not without misgivings that I venture on this publication. For

he who was so lenient and generous in viewing the errors of others was so merciless towards himself in the records of his own faults, and his mind exercised such a scathing power upon itself, and upon all his own thoughts, words and deeds, that some readers may think I have acted unwisely in exposing any part of the record.

Still I cannot think that any possessor of real religion will deem a man the worse Christian for holding severe views concerning himself; for maintaining the constant battle against the evils of our fallen nature, with the fervid desire for holiness, and never giving up the battle to the end. Holiness was the pole-star of my husband's religious life. That I can most veritably testify from my perfect spiritual union with him. And although he never attained the high and rapturous experience of De Renty, and Fletcher, and others, whose beatific characters he loved and admired so much, holiness not only formed a frequent theme of his preaching and his prayers, but its attainment was the strongest desire of his soul, and the constant aim of his daily life.

Such parts of the Memoir as are included within brackets, with an asterisk, are furnished by myself.

If I have not said enough to justify what I have done, one hundred pages would not suffice.

E. J.

21, Highbury Place, London, N.
December 1, 1883.

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LIFE OF

FREDERICK JAMES JOBSON, D.D.

I.

Early Life.

THE portrait of FREDERICK JAMES JOBSON must ever hold a prominent place in the historic gallery of Methodism. And it should be hung in the broad, bright sunshine. He was at once many-sided and unique; a monogram of Nature and of Grace. His character was a subtly-blended amalgam of seemingly opposite qualities, and was yet remarkably homogeneous. The *base* of his composition was Methodism. To say that his mother was a Methodist of the purest water, is not the whole truth: *Methodism was his mother.* His maternal grandfather was a Methodist in experience before becoming acquainted with Methodism as a system, and was an unconscious defender of its doctrines against the clergy of the cathedral, the services in which he attended twice every day up to the age of fourscore years. A

Methodist in creed and character, his was also a Methodist death. He was the means of the conversion of his favourite child, Dr. Jobson's mother. What Dr. Jobson writes of his mother, was equally true of himself: 'Methodism was her true home. There was something in its *social, joyous* character peculiarly suited to her temperament. Its hymns of fervour and true devotion, its unrestricted doctrines of grace and salvation, and its varied means of usefulness, well suited her ardent, generous and active soul.' ('A Mother's Portrait,' p. 52.)

Frederick Jobson's soul was steeped in genuine Methodism. He writes: 'When but a little child, I went with father and mother and sat on a low wooden stool by the fireside' (at the class-meeting of Brother Noble Sproule), in his cottage 'up a passage. . . .' 'How artlessly they told each other what God had done for their souls, until . . . the bruised reed breathed praise, and the smoking flax burst forth into a flame. And then how they lifted the prayer. The heavens rent at their cry, and God came down with saving power. "Joy unspeakable and full of glory" swelled each breast and filled each eye. The flame seemed to leap from heart to heart.' (*Ibid*, p. 55.)

What a pretty picture! the little rosy-faced curly-headed lad seated on a stool; the firelight playing on his grave, good-tempered face, and gleaming from the sympathetic moisture in his bright blue eyes. The holy fire which glowed with such intensity, and flamed

to such a height in 'the great congregation' in the after years, was kindled in the cottage class-meeting in that obscure alley by the river-side.

At school, he was taunted as a Methodist. Methodism was even then a social degradation in the proud cathedral-city. The square in front of his father's house was a favourite outdoor preaching-place, and the chairs were supplied from their own rooms, to 'the great risk of both chairs and windows, for stones would sometimes be thrown, and something like a riot be attempted.' (p. 58.)

Two essential elements of sterling Methodism which—sunk within his susceptible young heart—formed part of the foundation of his character, were *generosity* and *catholicity*. 'The luxury of doing good' was his mother's cherished self-indulgence. His parents, though not rich, yet with a catholicity of contribution, subscribed to all the great Missionary Societies of the time: Wesleyan-Methodist, Church, Baptist, London Missionary Society, as well as the Bible Society. A thorough-going Methodist, yet having been scripturally converted whilst a member of another Church, his mother 'did not suppose that all spiritual religion was enclosed within her own religious community.' (p. 179.) We have no doubt that his mother's intelligent and truth-loyal catholicity was, by the Divine blessing, her son's salvation to Methodism and to Protestantism. In describing her, he happily defines the true œcumenical charity, whilst

unintentionally depicting his own: 'Her charity did not run into looseness or latitudinarianism. She did not so merge all creeds and religious opinions that essential principle was swallowed up through an unbounded generalization. She knew how, for instance, to make a due distinction between Protestantism and Popery. . . . While firmly set against the *system* of Rome, she was ready to acknowledge and to improve the good found in *individuals*, who, like Thomas à Kempis . . . and others, were real saints under a false and corrupt system, with which from early life they were associated.' (p. 181.) He adds: 'My youth was chiefly spent among Roman Catholics, I having been articled for the study of architecture to a gentleman in Lincoln, who for pure benevolence of spirit, largeness of mind, extent of accurate information and scholarly accomplishments, has rarely been surpassed, but who was a most devoted and zealous Roman Catholic. At his table were not unfrequently to be met the bishops and priests of his Church, who were not only captivating by their literary attainments and extensive knowledge of the world, but also ready to converse on differences between Protestantism and Romanism. In these circumstances it will easily be understood that a Protestant youth's newly-found religion was a delicate plant in somewhat perilous ground.' We are able to testify to the simple accuracy of this description of Mr. Edward J. Willson, the distinguished architect, archæologist and patron of art. We have a

vivid recollection of him; indeed, he was a personage not easy to forget. His fine, delicate, classic face—like an ensouled marble statue—bore the clear impress of the gentleman, the scholar and the man of feeling. He was a Roman Catholic of the best British type, drawn from the life by an 'Ex-Roman Catholic Priest' in this magazine, in a supplementary article to his review of Mr. Arthur's great work, 'The Pope, etc.:' men who maintained a 'fine spirit of virtue and piety through old English traditions of honour and independence, . . . and lived and acted in the spirit of independent English gentlemen.'

But the very fact that Mr. Willson was far too honourable to be party to any attempt at proselyting a young Methodist entrusted to his care, and far too much the Christian gentleman to bring a railing accusation against the religion which had 'built the quiet while it formed the lives' of those whom the young student was most bound and had most cause to love—this only rendered the position more perilous to one of Frederick Jobson's impressible and affectionate nature. Any deliberate scheme must have betrayed itself, and put its object on his guard. Any denunciation or rude depreciation of Protestantism would have offended and repelled. The highly-cultivated ecclesiastics who were so often Mr. Willson's guests were too astute and too well-trained to make a blunt attack upon the home-learnt sentiments of a home-loving youth. They confined themselves to courteous and interesting *con-*

versations on the differences between Protestantism and Romanism. Dr. Jobson's testimony on this point is fully confirmed by that of another Methodist, who, through his influence, was for some years an inmate of Mr. Willson's house. We have often heard him dilate on the suave urbanity, the fascinating attentions, the marked interest and the winning deference with which they invariably treated him. Every one must feel how the young artist's warm imaginativeness, and his passion for painting and ecclesiastical architecture, would strengthen the allurements of a Roman Catholicism of the most attractive type. But his sound Wesleyan teaching and training, and, above all, his living Christian experience, proved an effectual safeguard. No Methodist minister surpassed him in detestation or denunciation of Popery as 'a system.'

In his journal he says: 'One priest (Mr. Simpkins, of Sixhills, Lincolnshire) was very kind to me. He was a learned, tasteful man, and took great pains to instruct me in perspective, etc. He sought to impress me with the excellence of popery, but failed. . . . Next to my parents, Mr. Willson has been the best friend I have had.'

In another respect the residence of the architect's pupil in the house of Mr. Willson, for so large a part of the most formative period of life, was of great service to him in after years. The effect of it was very apparent to those who knew him well. Mr. Willson being in the very first rank of his profession,

and a member of more than one learned society, as well as an influential writer, his house was a rendezvous for eminent artists and men of letters. The young artist being treated as one of the family, the society of such men was to him a most important education. Every one who enjoyed opportunities of noting Dr. Jobson's bearing when brought into contact with men accustomed to move in the higher ranks of life must have been struck with his perfect ease, his absolute self-possession, his faultless *savoir faire*, the utter absence of any *mauvaise honte*, or the slightest self-assertion or sect-assertion, or any ungainly over-representation of himself or of Methodism. He was as much at home with peer, with bishop, or with cardinal, as with the plainest brother Methodist. And at those delightful bringings-together of leading ministers of various denominations at his own house, or those gatherings during Conference-time to welcome our distinguished Transatlantic visitors, who could more admirably *do the honours* or more worthily play the host? *Could* anything, again, have been more apposite, more graceful, more suited to the scene and the ceremony, or more refined in taste and feeling, than Dr. Jobson's address to Dean Stanley in Henry VIIth's Chapel, on the occasion of the unveiling of the monument of John and Charles Wesley in Westminster Abbey? It was, in its kind, as perfect a piece of workmanship as the sculpture of Mr. Acton-Adams; and there can be no higher praise than that it was

well worthy to precede and elicit the exquisite eloquence and the subduing pathos of the dean himself. This easy bearing always struck us as most noteworthy in a Methodist minister so straightforward, so simple-mannered and so homely. Yet no one ever charged Dr. Jobson with having broken that *Rule of a Helper* which Dr. Arnold praised so much: 'Do not *affect the gentleman.*'

There is another sentence in Dr. Jobson's description of his mother's catholicity, wherein he unconsciously portrays one marked feature of his own: 'In some instances she might seem to carry her catholicity too far. . . . But she had learned that some people were better than their creeds; that they were good in spite of their systems.' (p. 182.)

Frederick James Jobson was born at Northwich, July 6th, 1812. During his childhood his parents settled in Lincoln. He has fairly been claimed as—what he always accounted himself—a citizen of that 'no mean city.' At the time of his conversion, Lincoln had need of Methodism, and Methodism was already a power in Lincoln. The saying of Sir Arthur Helps, as to most English cathedral-cities at that time: 'The temple seemed sadly too big for the religion of the place,' might have been spoken of that wherein Frederick Jobson passed his childhood and his youth. The stately minster looked forth from its 'sovereign hill' across a thriving city, whose inhabitants boasted of its world-famed architectural

glory far more than they cared to climb the steep ascent to worship in its courts. If the character of Lincoln Methodism may be judged of by the men whom it contributed to the Methodist ministry, it was of a rare quality. Four presidents: Richard Watson, John Hannah, John Bedford, Frederick J. Jobson, besides Daniel Isaac, John Hunt and several other very useful Methodist ministers were local preachers in the Lincoln Circuit. Young Jobson had the advantage of not only hearing in his early years able ministers of the New Testament, but also of listening to their conversation. His father's house was a favourite resort of the ministers when they found it necessary to unbend. He recalls with delight 'the many happy hours passed within the family circle in friendly and reverential association with them. The elder ministers related their experience of early Methodism, and described the work of God as it was carried on under Wesley and his helpers in the Gospel. And many an instructive and amusing anecdote would be told by them. . . . The younger ministers spoke of discussions in the Conference, . . . and of their own strong yearnings for the growth and prosperity of the cause of Christ.' (p. 134.) Few of them, we venture to affirm, could tell an 'instructive and amusing anecdote' with more *gusto* or more irresistible effect, or discuss either the Conference or 'the Cause' with more enthusiastic interest, than Dr. Jobson in his day. What an impression upon the

mind and heart of a youth like Frederick Jobson must have been made by such a man as Thomas Galland, a graduate of Cambridge, with his rich reading, his almost extreme liberality of sentiment, his sudden, sparkling wit, his profuse beneficence, and, above all, his beneficent fondness for the young! But the man who left the deepest impress upon Frederick Jobson's character was the great revivalist John Smith, by whose overwhelming ministrations Lincoln was stirred and shaken 'by the space of three years.' It was under John Smith's instrumentality that he was convinced of sin. His habits and associations had distressed and alarmed his godly parents. But he was not more than seventeen years of age at the time of his conversion. The 'free' 'good' Spirit dealt with him in accordance with his mental habitudes, as in the case of Count Zinzendorf.

We give his own account in his own words:

'I tried to repent, but thought that to be a penitent I must be alarmed and terrified on account of my sins .... but I could not feel alarmed. I read books to alarm me, but they failed in producing the desired effect, and I remained a Gospel penitent for nine months; . . . But, having heard the declarations of my parents and others as to the privilege of the Christian to know, by a Divine testimony to his conscience, that he is a child of God, I resolved not to rest without such a Divine testimony, and at length I obtained it. The circumstances attending upon my obtaining it were these: On a Sunday evening, when leaving the Wesleyan chapel, my father's leader, Mr. Isaac Robinson, said to me: "Inform your father

that Mr. Smith will meet the class for tickets tomorrow evening, and come you with him." I said I would, meaning I would inform him; but, reflecting afterwards on my answer, as it seemed to refer to all Mr. Robinson said, I was distressed and sought advice from my mother, who advised me to go. I went. The devoted and successful minister, John Smith, met the class. He said little to me, though he yearned deeply over my soul, and had often prayed for me. I went home more determined to seek rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. I prayed much, but understood not the way of faith. I went to the class-meeting the next Monday evening. The leader and members prayed earnestly for me, and for a time I was enabled to rely upon Christ; but, through doubt, I let go my hold of the Saviour as mine. After prayer, the friends around me said:

> "Come, brother! can't you rise and tell
> The wonders of Immanuel?"

when, considering whether I could answer in truth: "Yes, praise the Lord! I can," I hesitated; and, under the power of temptation, cast away my confidence, and went home doubting. On the evening following, I went into my room, prayed and tried to believe. Did so for a few moments, but doubted again. A few nights after, when in my room painting a picture from West's representation of "Christ brought before Pilate," I saw the simplicity of faith; put down my palette and brushes, cast my soul on Christ and calmly relied upon Him for salvation, and obtained it. I was was not filled with joy in believing, but had assurance and peace. This was on the 3rd of April, 1829.'

He has left us a fine, full-length portrait of John Smith, both as he stood in the pulpit and as he sat by the fireside, which proves that his own power of

delineation was not greater by the pencil than by the pen.* The genuine revivalist element in his own ministry was greatly owing to the kindling example of John Smith. The like influence must also have been exerted by his fellow local preacher Hunt, whose first uncouth essays at public speaking we have heard him describe with such loving, tender humour.

In this wide Circuit, and in that to which he was first appointed, Dr. Jobson acquired the practical interest in village Methodism so remarkable in one who had been, with the exception of the first year of his probation, stationed only in the metropolis or in large manufacturing towns.

Another feature in which Dr. Jobson, to use a Lincolnshire phrase, *favoured* his mother, was in a healthy, hearty enjoyment of life. True spiritual-mindedness is 'not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,' but with the seraphim it sings: 'The whole *earth* is full of Thy glory.' Dr. Jobson had a vivid perception of beauty and of grandeur, both in nature and in art, in matter and in mind. There was in him a plenitude of life. His mother taught him to 'feed among the lilies.'

The influence of Dr. Jobson's high training in ecclesiastical architecture is to this day widely felt, and its effects conspicuously visible, not only in Methodism, but also in other Nonconformist Churches.

* 'My Mother's Portrait,' p. 198.

In 1850, he published his work on 'Chapel and School Architecture, as Appropriate to the Buildings of Nonconformists, particularly to those of the Wesleyan-Methodists, with Practical Directions, etc.' The appearance of this book marks an era in the history of Methodist chapel-building. As a piece of literary workmanship this is his best production. The preface closes with a beautiful reference to the architectural studies of his youth:

'I have much more serious work in hand than the erection of perishable buildings, brick or stone; and although I do not deny that I have enjoyed much of the pleasures of memory during the hours I have been writing on Chapel and School Architecture, when I have had occasion to refer for proofs and illustrations to scenes visited in youth, when *my whole being was awed by the majestic piles, and grand and solemn effects of light and shade of the buildings in which I spent days, from early morning to latest eve, studying the principles of truth and power in architecture*—yet the pleasures of hope have had more influence over me; and nothing but the thought of rendering service to the Church of Christ would have induced me to give to this subject the fragments of my time which it has occupied.'

It must not be forgotten that *ecclesiastical* architecture was Mr. Willson's speciality, and that, both by his structures and his writings, he was the forerunner of Pugin and Sir Gilbert Scott in the revival of Gothic architecture.

It is bare justice to Dr. Jobson to show that he was far from being a devotee to Gothic architecture.

If, in any instance, the comfort and facility of speaking and hearing the Word have been sacrificed to the supposed requirements of a stately style of building, or if large sums have been lavished on magnificence of masonry or sumptuous ornamentation, at the expense of the needs of evangelistic work, Dr. Jobson is in no degree chargeable with any such diversion of the aggressive resources of a struggling Church. On the contrary, he records a dissuasive remonstrance against it. His words are:

'The writer is not pleading for a high style of elaboration and ornament in Wesleyan chapels. He is prepared to maintain that they should have *no unnecessary* adornment. He is convinced that an expenditure upon high adornment would be an abuse of God's gifts, and displeasing to Him from Whom they have been derived, and to Whom they are professedly dedicated. In many towns and villages of this kingdom, houses for Divine worship cannot at this time be raised, and ministers of the Gospel cannot be supplied for want of pecuniary means; and with such necessities it would be sinful to waste money on the smoothing of stones or the carving of ornaments . . . Simplicity rather than profuse elaboration is the characteristic of beauty. . . . How symmetrical, how simple and pleasing in their forms are the works of God!' ('Chapel and School Architecture,' pp. 10, 11.)

'I shall endeavour to show *how* Gothic architecture may be employed in Methodist chapels; guarding it from extravagance and abuse—to which, like many other good things, it stands greatly exposed.' (p. 40.)

How characteristic of Dr. Jobson's candour and moderation are the following remarks:

'Some pious and well-meaning Christians are fearful of the application of art, in any form, to the service of the Almighty. I honour the feeling, and should regret deeply to see carelessness arise as to the outward representations of Christianity. In these times of Tractarian heresy, caution is especially needed. But safety is in truth, not in extremes. I hope and pray that the day will never come when painted scenes and sculptured figures shall be introduced into Methodist chapels.' (*Ibid.*)

'Methodism requires chapels, and *not* churches, as the latter word is commonly understood, and we should not be inconsistent with our profession as Protestants in building fabrics only suitable for the forms of the Romish Church, or be wasteful in our expenditure. This consideration demands careful thought at the present time, for there have already appeared among Nonconformists significant signs of their danger—of rushing from one extreme to another. . . We must guard against this excess, and be careful not to shock the sound Protestant feeling of our people.' 'But . . . while I write *freely*, I must not even seem to condemn good and generous men, who, in their great zeal for God, committed unintentionally some improprieties,' (pp. 49-51.)

His only object, in fact, is expressed in the heading of his fifth chapter: to meet *The Particular Wants of Methodism in Chapel Building.* He pleads with genuine tenderness the claims and the *feelings* of the poor (pp. 65, 66), and exposes the evil 'of *erecting very large Methodist chapels.*' The rules which he lays down for their *internal* arrangements have happily been almost universally adopted as axioms. But chapel and school architecture was no *hobby* with

Dr. Jobson. More than one-fifth of the volume is taken up with advocacy of the claims of religious education and an exposition of the best modes of fulfilling this indispensable part of the Church's work.

Before passing on from his pre-ministerial life, we must allude to the life-long friendship formed, when he was eighteen years old, with the literary politician and poet-lecturer Thomas Cooper. Mr. Cooper thus describes his friend at this early age, and the fidelity of his friendship through all subsequent changes in life:

'Jobson was full of passion for art and of admiration for poetry, and had already displayed considerable eloquence as a preacher. His nature was all earnestness . . . We often contrived to meet, even while I remained at Gainsborough—sometimes on a Sunday, that we might preach in the same village, and have time to converse on . . . composition and on our work as preachers. My after-life has often separated me from my dear friend's companionship; but never, in any change of my opinions, or adverse turn of fortune, did he forsake me or fail to help me in a difficulty. And many a time I have had to rely upon him as my only human help. Our friendship has now (1871) lasted unbroken for two-and-forty years; and I thank God that ever I had such a true, faithful and unfailing friend as Frederick James Jobson.' ('My Life, etc.,' pp. 94, 95.)

Mr. Cooper dedicates his autobiography to Dr. Jobson as his 'dearest friend.' This tender tenacity of ever-helpful friendship is beautifully characteristic of Dr. Jobson's leal-hearted and self-sacrificing loving-

ness, which 'many waters,' wildly sweeping, could not quench, which the uttermost antagonism on the gravest questions, political and religious, could not shake. His was the charity which 'hopeth all things' in the face of black despair, and 'believeth all things' in the teeth of deadly unbelief. And faith and hope and charity were not confounded. Dr. Jobson lived to see his re-converted friend yet again preaching, with some degree of his youthful energy and more efficiency, the faith which once he so lamentably deserted.

II.

Earlier Ministry.

SOME further interesting reminiscences of Dr. Jobson's early life have, since his death, been received from Mr. Thomas Cooper. He writes:

'I was more than seven years his senior; but there was such readiness of apprehension, keenness of observation and discernment, and general ripeness of intelligence in him, combined with such frankness and heartiness, that my soul clave to him. Those who know how changeful my life has been will be sure that we did not always agree in sentiment and opinion; and that my friend did not fail to tell me when he believed I was wrong—grievously wrong. But he told me always in sorrow, never in anger.

'Frederick Jobson was a born artist. His mind was full of pictures. He saw pictures, colour, form and beauty, wherever he went, under God's sky and on God's beautiful earth; and he talked pictures, with the most easy and happy command of familiar words; so that there is no wonder that he became an impressive and popular preacher so early. There was a more commanding reason, however, than this for his great acceptance with the people: he was so thoroughly in earnest and felt so thoroughly the supreme importance of his work in the pulpit, that preaching for souls became a passion with him. We contrived to meet as often as possible; sharing each other's appointments; talking about sermons; and wrestling for holiness

together and not seldom joining our efforts in prayer-meetings for the salvation of sinners.

'One occasion of our meeting is often spoken of in Lincolnshire, to the present time. In our mention of it, we always call it "the Horncastle glory." It had been a custom for some years (I believe it is still) to hold a love-feast at Horncastle, in the afternoon of New Year's Day. People were accustomed to come from distant villages, the chapel was usually crowded, and spiritual good was ever the result. On New Year's Day, 1833, my friend and myself were among the local preachers invited to attend the love-feast, and three of us were requested to preach in succession, at night. I led the way with the grand text: "All things are possible to him that believeth." Jobson followed with the grandest of all texts: "God so loved the world, etc." Goodricke, another Lincoln local preacher (who died in the Mission-work), followed; but was short, for the excitement had reached spiritual white heat under Jobson's sermon. And now followed the prayer-meeting. The Rev. David Cornforth, a hearty Cornishman, then superintendent of the circuit, said: "The Lord is here! Lads, conduct the meeting your own way." So we conducted it in what we knew would have been John Smith's way; stepping from pew to pew, talking to sinners and getting them to seek for pardon; and singing a verse of praise when they had found it. Four-and-twenty times we had to sing such praise; for so many souls professed to find peace before two o'clock in the morning, when the meeting broke up. My beloved friend and I had often a like experience in those days, though on a smaller scale.

'Frederick Jobson's prospects were bright for success as an artist, but he resolved to sacrifice them all for Christ. I must not enter on the causes of my leaving Methodism. It was an evil day for me. My

dear friend came over to Lincoln and found me and my distressed wife in the midst of our trouble.' His heart was wrung with anguish, and he burst into an agony of tears. However, I could not be persuaded to go back, although I loved Methodism with an unspeakable love. I paid dearly for forsaking it, losing the best years of my life, partly in backsliding and partly in sceptical error. My friend protested against my Chartism. When I fell into the errors of Strauss, and gave up belief in the divinity, miracles and resurrection of Christ, remaining simply a worshipper of His moral beauty, my friend had great sorrow of heart, and often solemnly charged me to consider the peril I was running, not only for myself, but in misteaching others, yet he always believed I should get right.

'At length came the blessed time of my restoration to Christian belief. It was God's work only. I had the help of my dear friend and of noble Charles Kingsley when the work had begun.

'When, after the lapse of twenty-four years, I stood once more in a pulpit beside my friend, he spoke of it with tears of joy. During the twenty-two years which have followed, whenever we met, he and I and his pious wife were seldom many moments before we were on our knees, supplicating the Divine blessing, as in the days of our early friendship.'

Mr. Jobson entered the ministry in 1834, being then twenty-two years old. His first appointment was Patrington, which then included the present Hornsea Circuit, and comprised by far the greater part of the extensive coast-district of Holderness. He resided at Hornsea, some eighteen miles from the circuit-town. Vigorous as he was, he would have

found it difficult to do the work had not friends lent him a horse when needed. He at once took popularity by storm. His evangelistic fervour, his impassioned delivery, his redundant imaginativeness and his kindly, genial, joyous spirit won all hearts. Better still, he won souls; amongst others, Philip Egglestone, who became a clergyman. The rapidity with which he achieved reputation as a preacher may be gathered from the following incident which occurred during the first year of his ministry. Early one Sunday morning he was awoke by a loud knocking at the door of the house in which he lodged, and was soon informed that a gentleman, who had driven over from Hull on a matter of great urgency, wished to see him as soon as possible. The fact was that one of the most brilliant orators Methodism ever produced, then in the very zenith of his popularity, having come to Hull to preach the annual Missionary Sermons, had been suddenly taken ill at the house of the gentleman who brought the news, and was completely disabled. On consultation with the superintendent of the circuit and chairman of the district, the only feasible way of meeting the emergency that could be thought of was to fetch the young probationer from Hornsea. There was little time for objection or for hesitation. Some fourteen miles of road stretched between Hornsea and Hull. The Methodist authorities of Hull had staked all on this one cast; so, *nolens volens*—on pain of the displeasure of a disobeyed chairman, and of condemn-

ing a zealous layman to a bootless early morning drive of eight-and-twenty miles—he who had gone to rest in tranquil anticipation of a quiet country Sunday, had to face one of the choicest congregations, in one of the largest chapels in Methodism (Waltham-Street), assembled with eager expectancy to hear a preacher of the highest connexional repute. Suffice it to say the collections did not suffer.

That Sunday's experience proved a valuable preparation for another trial which awaited him. By the next Conference he was appointed to Grosvenor-Street, Manchester. At that time there was, we believe, no circuit in Methodism wherein resided so many of its magnates. Dr. Jobson confessed to us that never, before or since, in the regular course of his ministry was he conscious of anything so much like trepidation as when, in the second year of his probation, he found himself face to face with an assemblage so enormous in comparison with the rural congregations which he had been accustomed to address—assemblies including families so famous in Methodism as the Woods, the Chappells and the Fernleys. He described particularly the awe with which he looked up at the stately form of George Chappell, who, on his first Sunday morning in the circuit, came into the vestry before the service, to welcome him and to enquire as to his familiarity with *the Order for Morning Prayer*, a service which the young Lincolnshire Methodist had never even heard in a Methodist chapel. But his first tremor was his

last. His preaching had as potent a charm for the wealthy manufacturers and the sallow operatives of a huge industrial centre, as for the comfortable farmers and the round-faced labourers and hard-featured fishermen of Holderness. His presence was not less welcome in the mansions of Ardwick and the villas of Oxford-Road, than it had been in the farmsteads of Sunk Island or the shrimpers' cottages on the coast. We believe there has never been an instance, in the history of Methodism, of a popularity so suddenly achieved. Mr. T. Percival Bunting, who attended his ministry at this time, sends us the following testimony:

'He was earnest and genial, simple in speech and habit, with a great aptness in making and keeping friends; in the pulpit a flame of fire; out of it a diligent, patient and successful worker. I believe that he himself was *stormed* into penitence—not before he needed it—and that the change was of the old-fashioned sort—painful in the process, and thorough in the result. As he came to estimate more truly the powers and responsibilities of the pulpit, he worked more thoroughly in the study; stayed and quieted his manner, cast his thoughts into a regular shape, and curbed, without repressing, his lively imagination, all the while—as to the last—preserving simplicity and force of aim. His preaching was of the old Methodist type, with plenty of truth in it—truth *worth preaching to dying sinners.* But its strength was spent on *the formal application. Now* he became mighty—as powerful, if not as persuasive as Rattenbury. "The common people" and rich backsliders (I have one now in my mind's eye) trembled under it.'

It was during his second year in the Grosvenor-Street Circuit, the third of his probation, that we first enjoyed the privilege of hearing him speak. His fame had already spread to the West Riding, and it was with high anticipation that we walked from Woodhouse Grove to Bradford to ascertain the qualities which had in so short a term achieved so splendid a celebrity. That memorable Missionary Meeting at Eastbrook Chapel we have already attempted to describe in our sketch of Philip Garrett, in this Magazine (January, 1877, p. 69). The huge edifice was packed. Seven speeches of unusual interest and effect had been delivered before the Rev. Frederick J. Jobson was announced: speeches all the more telling because limited to twenty minutes each. The chairman, G. Brown, Esq., a Halifax lawyer of great repute; Philip Garrett; the Baptist Godwin, then the most popular preacher in Bradford; Peter Duncan, fresh from the West Indies; Samuel D. Waddy, Francis A. West, and Dr. Ryerson from Canada, had all done their very best, and most of them were at that time—for platform-purposes—*at* their very best. 'The Rev. Frederick J. Jobson, from Manchester, will second the resolution'! One's ideal of the physique of a young orator was not perfectly realised as he rose. A well-rounded figure, the brow being the best moulded part, moved awkwardly, and as it seemed tremulously, even stumblingly towards the front of the platform. He was 'ruddy and of a fair counten-

ance,' and looked what he was, about five-and-twenty summers old. There was an almost rural bloom upon his cheeks, which certainly were not 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.' He had a modest profusion of naturally-curling hair. He appeared to find no small difficulty in beginning. His utterance seemed almost choked by a convulsive impediment in his articulation. He was evidently struggling to suppress *some* emotion. It turned out afterwards that as he rose, in obedience to the chairman's call, some portion of the planking yielded to his tread, and Mr. Waddy (whether knowing or not knowing Mr. Jobson's irresistible sense of the ludicrous, he would never confess), sitting within ear-shot and seeing the mischance, had whispered audibly one of his brilliant *bon mots,* which Mr. Jobson so keenly appreciated that he had much ado to maintain his propriety, and to suppress an untimely explosiveness. But when his theme fairly got the mastery of him, he obtained absolute mastery of his audience. The overpowering charm of his eloquence consisted in its originality, its natural poetry and its glowing, pictorial illustrations, combined with downright Methodist simplicity and fervour. There was nothing in him of the elocutionist, the rhetorician or the actor. He was simply a young Methodist preacher, with the eye of a painter, the fancy of a poet and the zeal of an evangelist.

The next time we saw Mr. Jobson was at the Leeds Conference (1837), at the close of his third year of

probation. The Rev. John M'Lean, the great revivalist of that time, whose state of health had precluded any appointment on the Conference Plan, had been persuaded to preach in the Old Boggard House Chapel on a week-day morning, and Mr. Jobson was chosen to relieve him of the rest of the service. His utter unaffectedness, his subdued fervour, his self-restraint evidently from regard for the preacher's physical feebleness, and the tender importunity of his prayer for the restoration to health of the disabled evangelist, were very touching and impressive.

At that Conference he received, as President's Assistant, his first appointment to City-Road. Thus early in his ministry began his long connection with that venerable sanctuary, where he preached the Gospel for three terms of three years, and in which he so often afterwards ministered during the long course of his book-stewardship.

In 1838, he married Elizabeth, daughter and only child of Mr. Caborn, of Beverley. As the lady survives to mourn his loss, we can only say that never were two human beings more clearly made for each other, and never was the unison of two kindred spirits more harmoniously complete. One of his best paintings is that of the exquisite interior of Beverley Minster, with the newly-married pair kneeling to receive the benediction.

Our limits preclude anything beyond an outline of Dr. Jobson's ministerial course. In London, from the

very first, he was as popular as he had been in Manchester, in the East Riding and in Lincoln. That was not to be wondered at; the marvel was, that he had sense and grace enough to bear his ovations without the slightest perceptible injury to his simplicity of spirit or of manner. A highly popular London minister compared London popularity to the embrace of a bear: stifling its victim with its rank breath, and crushing the soul out of him with its relentless hug. Frederick Jobson's strong sense and elastic earnestness saved his spiritual life from suffocation. But this is by no means an exceptional case amongst popular metropolitan ministers.

Friendship forms so essential an element of a happy life, and especially in that of Dr. Jobson, that it comes quite within our scope to note the acquisition of three most precious friendships during his first three years at City-Road: those of Dr. Bunting, W. M. Bunting and John Farrar. One of Dr. Bunting's finest faculties was the power to discern in young men real mental and moral worth, and their adaptation for special spheres and special work, and no man was more ready to give to them, or more sure to win from them in return, the heartiest appreciation. Mr. William M. Bunting and Mr. Farrar were Dr. Jobson's colleagues at City-Road. What a trio of young ministers to be stationed in the same circuit at the same time! And how well would the revolving lustre of each 'bright particular star' combine with the

steady luminousness of the elder Richard Treffry, and the clear, sparkling gleam of Jacob Stanley, senior! What a constellation! And with what an influence of ministerial endowment must Methodism have at that time been favoured to be able to spare for any one circuit, albeit the first, such a redundance of pulpit-power!

In 1839, George Osborn became Frederick Jobson's colleague, and thus another most important and influential friendship, begun whilst Mr. Osborn was in the Second London Circuit, ripened into intimacy.

In 1840, Mr. Jobson was stationed in the Third London Circuit (Spitalfields). It was at the close of his first year in that circuit that we first heard him preach. The occasion was the opening of a chapel in a Derbyshire hamlet—Street-Lane. His text was: 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, etc.' The discourse was marked by a simplicity beyond the reach of an inferior preacher, by manly tenderness, by pictorial power and by the utter absence of self-consciousness. His brilliant reputation, as the rising orator of Methodism, was evidently no concern at all of his. Those who came from the neighbouring towns to hear a pulpit-prodigy heard only a thoughtful, zealous preacher of the Gospel, whose vivid fancy, unchecked, unbidden, could not but at times betray itself.

In 1842, Mr. Prest became his colleague, and thus

began one more of the many friendships which enriched his life.

[*At the Sheffield Conference of 1843, he was appointed to the Leeds Brunswick Street Circuit, in which he remained three years. What he experienced and endeavoured to do, and to become, during this period, he registered in his journal with more fulness than at other periods. I therefore judge it right to give extracts from his journal, entire:—

'I have been greatly blessed. Have seen many sinners converted, and have had good health. At times I have had very gracious visitations of the Holy Spirit; but I am very far from being what I ought to be, as a minister of the Gospel of Christ, and must be better than I am to be safe, useful and happy. Since I came to Leeds I have read ancient history, have studied mental philosophy, and made some acquaintance with the Hebrew—(employing a Jewish teacher) —as well as with the Greek and Latin languages.

'My journey to the south of Ireland, in April, 1845, as a missionary advocate, was very interesting to me. I visited beautiful Killarney, experienced the generous hospitality of a noble people, but grieved to see so much of Popery.

'The Conference of 1845 was at Leeds. Dr. and Mrs. Bunting were our guests, and we had the honour and the pleasure of entertaining many of the best friends in Methodism. I have also had the privilege of attending the preparatory meetings of the Evangelical Alliance, held in Liverpool, in November, 1845; and had the honour of being elected a member of the Committee for the Northern District. This is very grateful to me, for the meetings were truly

glorious, and they were the commencement of a very important association. In those meetings I mingled with the most eminent of living ministers of the various sections of the Church of Christ—saw much brotherly love manifested—and had my views of the cause of Christ greatly enlarged.

'From this review of my life I am grateful to the Lord God for His goodness to me; but I am deeply humbled and ashamed at the remembrance of my pride, selfishness, ingratitude and rebellion; and I cannot live without repentance and amendment. I desire to repent. And if conviction for sin, sorrow for sin, hatred of it, and a resolution to forsake it, constitute repentance, then I *do* now repent. But repentance cannot save me. The Lord Jesus Christ alone can save me; and he has promised salvation to all that believe in him. And if reliance of the soul upon Christ for a present salvation be faith, then I now believe in Him. O Jesus! Thou knowest that I declare this with sincerity, and without any known guile and reservation. I am now returning to Thee! Return unto me, and save me from my most secret and most easily-besetting sins! I now resign my body, soul and spirit into Thine hands: make me wholly and eternally Thine! That I may be assisted and confirmed in my resolutions to serve God more faithfully, I write down the following *Rules for my conduct,* and record the *Covenant* I have frequently made and broken; but which I now solemnly repeat and sign before God:

1. I will commence and conclude each day with the entire surrender of my body and soul to God.

2. I will endeavour to keep constantly in remembrance the presence of God; and in speaking and in acting seek to please Him.

3. I will daily practice self-denial—avoiding whatever induces effeminacy and softness; and I will be

watchful against indulgences in eating and drinking, and in sleep.

4. I will be frequent and earnest in prayer; and endeavour, in each day of my life, to obtain some satisfactory token of my acceptance with God.

5. I will daily read some portion of Scripture for my personal benefit, and endeavour to store up some passage in my mind.

6. I will seek to promote the spiritual welfare of my wife, and my servants; and, when away from home, I will endeavour so to order my conversation that I shall increase the spirituality of the minds of those with whom I may be associated. I will frequently pray with my wife, converse with her daily on experimental religion, and endeavour to improve her heart and mind.

7. In my studies, I will recognise my dependence on God for the attainment of useful and religious knowledge; will commence every effort with prayer for the Divine blessing; and in my written preparations for my work, never sacrifice the practical and useful to the ornamental.

8. In my association with my brethren, I will avoid suspicion and envy; will acknowledge and praise what is good in them; and, at all times, cover rather than expose their failings.

9. In my public ministrations I will be simple, earnest and faithful. I will depend on God for assistance, and will avoid all ostentation and show. And in all things I will strive *to be* rather than *appear to be.*

10. In my intercourse with my people, I will maintain the dignity and seriousness becoming a minister of the Gospel of Christ. I will be faithful in pastoral visitations, and pay especial attention to the poor, to the sick, and to the young.

I will frequently examine myself by these rules, and faithfully record what has been my conduct.'

Following this entry in the journal, is one of very solemn import. It is entitled—

'*An Act of solemn Dedication of Myself to God.*

'Most merciful and indulgent God, Thou hast spared me unto this day, and art disposing me to surrender myself wholly to Thy service. Assist me to perform this solemn act of self-dedication to Thee; and save me from relying on it, or on anything that I can perform. May my sole dependence, now and ever, be on Thy mercy to sinners in Christ Jesus, Thy Son. I have sinned most grievously against Thee. In childhood, in youth, and in manhood, I have been ungratefully rebellious; and my transgressions are such as justly stamp me as the worst of sinners. This I not only write, but unfeignedly believe. But Thou hast graciously given invitations to the worst of sinners, and hast promised salvation to all that believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I come to Thee, a penitent sinner, and rely on the atoning sacrifice of Christ alone for acceptance with Thee, and dedicate my body, soul and spirit to Thy service—resolving that from this time forth I will be faithfully and constantly Thine. Thou Triune Jehovah—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—I now sign this Act of Dedication, with a sincere, penitent, believing and obedient heart. Accept, and seal me Thine until the day of redemption. The Covenant I now make on earth may it be ratified in heaven! Amen.

'F. J. JOBSON.'

In my Study, 17, Brunswick Place, Leeds.
May 16*th*, 1846.

This Act of Dedication, he signed ten times in years succeeding at 100, Radnor Street, Manchester, September 23rd, 1846; at 2, Thurlow Place, Hackney

Road, London, October 11th, 1849; again in London, December 26th, 1850; in Lambeth, September 25th, 1854; at Bradford, September 21st, 1855; at Huddersfield, June 6th, 1859; and three times at 21, Highbury Place, London, where he died: January 10th, 1866; February 12th, 1877, and January 1st, 1878.'

On the next page of the journal, written also while he was in the Leeds Brunswick Circuit, is another entry showing how his mind was bent on the right employment of his time. It begins—

'The following rules I write for my weekly and daily guidance as far as circumstances shall allow.

WEEKLY RULES.

Sunday.—To be sacredly devoted to the service of God; doing nothing in mental or manual labour that can be done on the ordinary days of the week.

Monday.—9 o'clock, Journal; 9½, History and Science; 2½, Poetry and *Belles Lettres.*

Tuesday.—9, Languages; 2½, Miscellaneous Reading; 4, Pastoral Visitation.

Wednesday.—9, Reading in Divinity; 2½, Mental Philosophy.

Thursday.—9, Composition; 2½, Reading in Divinity.

Friday.—9, Composition; 3½, Pastoral Visitation.

(*A day of Abstinence.*)

Saturday.—Pulpit preparation.

DAILY RULES.

1. To rise at 6 o'clock, and to devote the time before breakfast to reading the Scriptures and prayer.

2. To have private prayer once a day with the dear partner of my life.

3. To spend some time in private prayer, daily, as near to 11 in the forenoon, and 4 in the afternoon, as circumstances will allow.

4. To note down, in my common-place book, what I find in reading, or learn in hearing, that is likely to be profitable to myself, or useful to others.

5. To be watchful against careless and hurried performance of family worship, and to seek to make it eminently a means of grace.

6. To examine myself religiously on my return from evening services; and to seek at all times, when walking, to maintain the habit of communion with God.'

His last entry in the journal, while in the Leeds Brunswick Circuit, from 1843 to 1846, is—

'*A Prayer for Divine Assistance,*

To be used before engaging in pulpit preparation.

Thou infinitely wise, holy, and powerful Jehovah, Who broughtest me into existence, and endowedst me with the power of understanding, reason and memory, graciously aid me in the work in which I am about to engage. Enable me to select for consideration the most useful and suitable subject; to understand it; and to set it forth in the most attractive and convincing form to others. When I read, impress the truth upon my mind, and stamp it indelibly on my memory. When I reason, assist me to compare ideas, and to judge correctly. And, when I write, fill my heart with love to Christ, and to the souls of men. And so aid me in my pulpit preparations, that when I enter the sanctuary, it may be with unwavering faith in Thee for the help I shall need. Lord Jesus, be Thou my Saviour, and impart to me Thy mind, so

that my preaching may be full of Thee! Holy Spirit, anoint me for my work, and make me successful in beseeching men to be reconciled to God. Triune Jehovah—Father, Son and Holy Ghost! accept my service, and use me for Thy glory, and for the salvation of sinners. Amen.'

In 1846 he returned to his old ground in Manchester—Oxford Road, which had been divided from Grosvenor Street. Of this appointment he says:

'I sought sincerely, as far as I know myself, the guidance of God in the preliminary arrangements for this appointment, and am come to this circuit with the chief desire to do good. I have already had evidence of the Divine blessing upon my endeavours, and for this I give praise to God. The friends have received me very kindly. I am now located in Radnor Street, where a new chapel is being erected, and where I shall have much to do in the formation of a Church, this being new ground. O Lord, give me grace to be faithful, and make me a great blessing to my fellow-men! I, this morning, renew the dedication of myself to Thee!'

Then follow, in his journal, an account of his reading of Roman history, of the sufferings of the Waldenses, of the Life and Correspondence of John Foster, the Life of Richard Baxter, and Coleridge's 'Table Talk.' These notes of his reading are succeeded by remarks on his spiritual state.

'Since I last wrote in this book,' he observes, 'my religious experience has varied. I have, at times, felt good desires kindling within me, and have realised the great truth that none but God can fill and satisfy the soul. O when shall I be pure in thought, motive

and desire! I must be simple and sincere. My spirit needs much discipline. This I have more fully seen from reading part of Thomas-à-Kempis, a book which, though written by an ascetic, yet contains some valuable and searching truths. I do not pray sufficiently; and in my preparations for the pulpit, and in the delivery of my sermons, I am too much influenced by man. O Lord, deliver me! Amen.'

A second missionary visit to Ireland gave my husband an opportunity of seeing the Giant's Causeway, and led him to make acquaintance with geology, by reading Lyell and Richardson. In the same year, in company with Dr. and Mrs. Bunting, we made a most delightful visit to Scotland, and returned to Manchester by way of the English lakes.

Remembrances of the years we spent in Radnor Street are very grateful. Around the new chapel soon there was not only a numerous population, but a society of two hundred members was formed. I feel grateful to God that He honoured me as an humble instrument in this work. I observed diligently those who seemed to get good under the preaching, and by persuasion was enabled to form a large class, which I left in the care of an intelligent and experienced leader when we removed to another circuit. As the wife of a Methodist minister, it was delightful to me to assist my dear husband, and his fellow-labourers, in this successful endeavour to extend the Saviour's kingdom.*]

In 1849 began his second three years' term at

City-Road. This period was coincident with that of the fiercest paroxysm which ever tested the constitution of Methodism. He was both fearless and pacific, as gentle as he was firm. His good temper, equanimity and kindliness were the more remarkable and the more praiseworthy in consideration of the strength and sensitiveness of his attachment to the very individuals and institutions which were the main objects of attack. To him, both as a benefactor and an advocate, was greatly owing the origination and the success of the fund for the relief of ministers whose allowances were stopped by disturbed societies; as also of the Relief and Extension Fund. Throughout that terrific struggle, we believe, he never compromised his charity or his loyalty, never lost his temper and never lost a friend.

At this point, we must not omit to notice the active interest which he took in two great Connexional erections: the Normal Training College at Westminster, and New Kingswood School, Bath, especially the latter. In both cases, as in that of the Theological Institution, Richmond, his architectural taste, skill and experience rendered Methodism good service.

[* As a relief from the immense activity of this part of my dear husband's ministerial service, he was enabled to gratify the wish he had long entertained of visiting the continent. I accompanied him; and, in company with kind friends, we visited Paris,

Brussels, the field of Waterloo, Antwerp, Cologne, and the Rhine scenery. Yet it was not mere relaxation from work which relieved or satisfied him. The succeeding extracts from his journal will show that the desire for holiness is still the master-passion of his soul, and that he is as severe upon himself as ever, in reviewing his religious state:

'The scenes I viewed on the continent have enlarged my views of human nature and the world, and have led me to value more highly the Protestant faith and worship.

'Since I came to London, I have read and written much. I have completed my course of reading in ancient history, and have studied several books of the Holy Scriptures. I have not been negligent of pulpit preparation, and have gone through the book of the Acts of the Apostles with a class of young persons. I have also revised my papers on chapel architecture, and published them in a separate volume —500 copies of which have almost gone in four months—and which has been favourably reviewed, as well as received. I am now purposing to devote myself to the study of the Scriptures, and shall prepare a series of discourses which will include the principal notices of leading epochs and events recorded in them. I am thankful for the increased love I have for Scripture-studies. My delight is in the law of the Lord. But, on reviewing my religious life within this period, I have to record my great unfaithfulness. I have not performed that which I vowed unto the Lord, and I have most seriously transgressed the commandments of God. I should be discouraged from any further attempt at devotedness to Him, if it were not that I believe in His infinite mercy and almighty power.

'Besides, what can I do? I cannot remain in my present state. I must enjoy God, or have no satisfaction or enjoyment. If I forsake God I shall be destroyed; and though I am ashamed to return to Him, and plead again for that mercy which I have so repeatedly abused, yet I must return to Him, or perish. Nor is it my own salvation only that is involved in my return. I am a minister of God for the salvation of others; and my usefulness is mainly dependent upon my purity of heart, and obedience of life. O God, cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Surely, it is by the influence of Thy Spirit that I do now seek Thy face. I resolve to love and obey Thee in the time to come. I cast myself wholly on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. For His sake pardon all my sins. Renew my heart in righteousness. Live and reign within me. Then, by Thy strength, I shall perform that which of myself I cannot do; and I shall be innocent from the great transgression!' *]

In 1852, he began at Lambeth his first superintendency—a most opportune appointment. In 1855, he was stationed at Bradford (Eastbrook). At the same time, he was chosen one of the representatives of the British Conference to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, which was to open its sessions at Indianopolis, in May, 1856, his colleague being his old friend Dr. Hannah. Thus Lincoln Methodism contributed both representatives of British Methodism to that of the United States.

Of his experiences and impressions during his voyage and his travels in the States, he has left us a highly-interesting and permanently valuable record in

his spirited, observant and judicious volume, 'America, and American Methodism.' The first element in the book which strikes one (after the simple devoutness and affectionateness which could not fail to manifest itself), we know not how to characterise but as good-humoured humour. His description of the 'concentrated inconveniences' of the voyage; of the 'closet-dungeon, miscalled a state-cabin;' and the discomfiture of most of the guests assembled for dinner, whilst rocked on the bosom of the Bay of Biscay—when 'stern, moustachioed soldiers fled at the sight of a boiled leg of a dead sheep'—is worthy of a born humorist. What next impresses us is his pictorial power of description: for instance, his vivid representation of a tremendous storm in mid-Atlantic, when he stayed on deck all night, holding by a rail, that he might not miss a spectacle which he had long desired to witness. But his quieter touches, most of all, renew the charm of his early speeches and sermons: such as his sketch of the features of an English landscape which he most missed in America: 'the signs of elegant thrift mingled with the weather-beaten memorials of past ages; the baronial mansion, frowning with embattled parapet over surrounding moat; the squire's seat peeping through the long-drawn avenue of elms or beeches; the merchant's country house resting on closely-cropped lawn, and the labourer's cottage half smothered in roses and honeysuckles.'

One of his most powerful passages is the account of the Sunday evening service conducted by him in the African church in Baltimore, concluding with the solo by a negress—whose 'voice rang and soared as if it were the voice of a rapt seraph singing alone in the ecstatic audience of angels'—and followed by an eloquent burst of hopeful and impassioned sympathy with the African race. This would form a most effective 'reading' in any Christian company whose sensibilities were rightly toned.

A fine companion-reading is that scene of irresistible pathos—the introduction to the Conference of Grey Eyes, the Wyandot Indian preacher, who, to behold once more his spiritual father, had walked from the Far West. We are made to see this native pastor of an oppressed people, standing on the platform amongst the bishops and the officials of the Conference, 'with smooth, strong hair of mingled white and black,' and 'tawny, shrunken face,' whereon 'care and suffering have ploughed their furrows deep, ... footworn and haggard, with signs on his legs and clothes of his recent struggling over the soil, and through the entangled brushwood of the forest'—'The Indian who, before his conversion, would have died rather than shed a tear, and who, according to the spirit of his people, would have chanted his death-song while in the hands of his murderous tormentors, sobbed and cried like a child. The tears . . . . fell pattering down upon the floor. He tried to speak, but was

choked with feeling. Again he tried, and gave utterance to a few words, which a worn, browned labourer among the Indians interpreted for the Conference as being: "I am far too small to speak to you. I am very small among Christian ministers; but the love of Christ is in my heart. I am going, like you, to heaven, and will speak to you there."'

And then the rehearsal, by 'the darkly sun-burnt interpreter,' of the closing passage of Brother Grey Eyes' sermon to his heart-broken nation, on the eve of their cruel exodus, when driven forth by the heartless cupidity of baptized pale-faces to find a camping-ground far enough away to leave some hope of dying undisturbed before the remorseless tide of Christian civilisation should sweep them into the sea! What can exceed the pathos of this peroration: 'My people, we now go from this place of our fathers, who are buried here. We must bid an everlasting farewell to our mountains, our rivers and our hunting-grounds. And, most of all, we must bid farewell to our house of God, which we built, and wherein we have worshipped and rejoiced together. But God shall go with us, and bless us in our new home.' The author of "The Last of the Mohicans and The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish' might envy such a scene as this.

Dr. Jobson's picture of an American Conference, and his pen-portraits of its notables, especially of the 'unique and grand sample of manhood,' Peter Cart-

wright, are very striking. Such a book was not at all superfluous four-and-twenty years ago; and it is still valuable as a faithful and artistic photograph of American society and American Methodism in the middle of the present century. His views of the relations of American Methodism to slavery have an importance for the historian. He won the heart of American Methodism. The intelligence of his death, which appeared in the American papers the day after it was announced in ours, would moisten many an eye.

At any rate, no one on this side the water could complain that Dr. Hannah and Dr. Jobson were not fair and even favourable samples of Englishmen and English Methodism. But the most important point for our present purpose is the writer's own unconscious self-manifestation. His genial, charitable spirit exhales from every page. His large, warm heart beats in every paragraph. 'The seeing eye' gleams out goodnaturedly at every turn, yet it takes a wide sweep, and is quick to note the salient points. Philanthropy, catholicity and charity are his unwearied travelling companions and *ciceroni*. Never have American society and American Methodism found a more candid or more conscientious annotator.

In 1855, Dr. Jobson also published that beautiful tribute of filial affection, "A Mother's Portrait." Here, as in his "America," the form of *Letters* is happily chosen, giving to the style an easy, confidential air, which well becomes the writer. It is more than a beautiful and

lifelike picture of womanly and domestic saintliness; drawn with tenderness and truth, it gives us a privileged peep into a happy Methodist home, together with a view of a well-worked, thriving Methodist circuit. The book was heartily welcomed in America, and an American edition was forthwith issued.

In May, 1858, Dr. Jobson experienced a marked providential deliverance from a danger more imminent, or at least more apparent, than any he had encountered in the Atlantic or during his travels in America. We will give the details in the words of Thomas Cooper, who was his companion in danger and deliverance:

'I had engaged to deliver six lectures on the Evidences, in St. George's Hall, Bradford, and was to be the guest of my beloved friend Dr. Jobson, who was then stationed at Bradford, but had come to London on a preaching visit . . . . On Monday morning, May 10th, 1858, ... I got early to the Euston-Square Station. I opened a door in the second carriage behind the engine and tender, and was about to step into it, when a porter, who was an utter stranger to me, took hold of my portmanteau, and said: "Don't go in there, sir; go a little lower down." I yielded to the man, but felt a little surprised at his motion. I had just put my portmanteau under the seat of the carriage lower down, and was looking out for Dr. Jobson, when I saw him about to get into the very carriage I had left. I shouted to him and beckoned him, and he came and got into the carriage with me, but expressed his surprise when I told him how the porter had particularly led me to enter it. . . . Before we started, a barrister (who was killed between two

and three hours after) came and called one of our companions out—as it proved, to have his leg broken. It was a short express train, and we went on rapidly but steadily till we came within a mile of Nuneaton. There was now a bend in the line, and a bridge over the bend, so that neither engine-driver nor guard could see any danger till they passed from under the bridge. A cow had had her calf taken from her, and, becoming unruly, got upon the line. . . . A man who had been trying to drive her off, stood close to the railway line, and waved a red flag. . . . The cow was crushed to death; but the shock and check put upon our motion broke the coupling-chain whereby the carriages were fastened to the engine and tender. The engine and tender went on, but the carriages rebounded back; and first one went off the line and rolled over the ten feet descent, then a second, a third, and a fourth. Next, the coupling-chain of ours, the fifth, was broken, and the whole carriage of three compartments was removed from one line of rails to the other, as if supernatural beings had lifted it up, and placed it down again. . . .

'The glass was broken in our carriage, but not a hair of the head of any person in it was injured. In the other carriages there was not a passenger without injury of some kind, and three were killed. . . .

'I observed a circle of persons gathered in a field, and was told the dead were in their midst. I went to gaze; and as I saw the three figures in their clothes and boots, lying side by side, with a cloth covering their faces, I said to myself: "I and my friend might have been two of those three, but Thou, O Lord, hast preserved us"!' ('The Life of Thomas Cooper, pp. 375-378.)

In this year appeared Dr. Jobson's 'Tribute to the Memory of the Rev. Jabez Bunting, D.D.' The

'sketch' of the 'character and services' of that great man is drawn from the life, with vigour, skill, and truth. That most commanding figure is represented by the eye and hand of an artist, as he actually appeared, in the pulpit, on the platform, in council, and in social and domestic life, without exaggeration, although with the tender reverence of a cherished friend and an enthusiastic admirer. Of Dr. Bunting, he records, in his private journal: 'He loved me as a father, and with him I have had the great honour of most intimate friendship. His house has always been my home. He has inspired me with greater love for Methodism, and has taught me much of its true spirit as a system of religious truth. I never heard him speak evil of any one, or utter a word indicative of selfishness or pride, and with his great, massive, powerful intellect, he is in friendship as simple and familiar as a child.'

[* I cannot forbear to record that my dear husband's love of conversion-work was largely gratified while he was superintendent of the Bradford (Eastbrook) Circuit. Thus he notes in his journal, in the early part of 1856: 'Special services in the circuit were crowned with Divine blessing. More than 100 converted.' Later in the same year, he notes: 'Special services very successful at Eastbrook and Bradford Moor.' Again, under the date of January, 1858, he notes: 'At the special services

in Bradford E. Circuit, many penitents: supposed as many as 300. Great commercial panic, through American affairs; but, religiously, our societies prospered.' September 5th, 1858, he says: 'Preached last sermon in the Bradford E. Circuit, in a vast tent, at Cutler Heights, from God not willing that the sinner should die. Felt much on leaving the circuit. I had found it a large field for good service; the friends had been very kind to me, and God had mercifully blessed me in my work.'

September 9th, 1858, he says: 'Removed to Huddersfield 1st Circuit, where I found a friendly people, and a comfortable house; but through the division the society and congregation had been much reduced. The congregation in Queen Street did not number more than 400; but the remnant are united and spiritual, and at the quarterly meeting the return for the quarter showed an increase of sixty-four members.' Early in 1859, he notes: 'God has graciously blessed us in this circuit. The congregations have increased considerably, and many sinners have been converted. Our character in the town, too, is raised.' And of the March quarter of the same year, he says: 'Increase of members on the year, 196. Finances improved.'

On the 6th of June, in the same year, he again notes his spiritual state—still with the same stern analysis and faithfulness to conscience. 'I am spared,' he says, 'to see another anniversary of my birthday.'

(He was now forty-seven.) 'This is an infinite mercy, for I have been a most unfaithful and unprofitable servant. I am deeply humbled at the remembrance of my sins; and, forsaking them all, I cast myself on the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ—praying and believing for pardon and acceptance. I must redeem the time, for the days are evil. I must watch more carefully over my heart, and must be more godly in my motives. I must observe more minutely the movements of my mind; and that I may do so, I resolve to record in this book, more frequently, and more in detail, the state and exercises of my soul. I want more purity and holy motive, and more thorough uprightness in all I do. Again, I formally renew my covenant with God.'*]

III.

Later Ministry and Death.

WE have now reached the mid-term of Dr. Jobson's long and active ministry. By the Conference of 1860, he was elected as its representative to the Australasian Conference, to be held in Sydney in January, 1861. The duties of this laborious and responsible commission he discharged with characteristic energy, heartiness and efficiency. But we must content ourselves with referring our readers to his highly interesting volume, 'Australia; with Notes by the Way, on Egypt, Ceylon, Bombay and the Holy Land.' He also made a survey of our circuits in Tasmania. By the Conference of 1861, he was, a third time, appointed to the City Road Circuit. 'My old friends welcomed me,' he says, 'and returning to them was as returning home.'

In 1864, he was appointed book-steward; and was thus brought into the closest association with our Connexional literature. His nomination took provincial Methodism by surprise. His predecessors in that unique and much-requiring office had all been men of mark and position, but they had all belonged to a category or classification wherein no one thought of placing Dr. Jobson. No preacher so popular and in such large request had ever been *detailed* for this

particular service. It was doubted by some whether the work would suit his special habitudes; whether, in fact, he could *take to* it. He had given ample proof of a facility and a *penchant* for affairs, and of skill and judgment in economics. Above all, he was the very symbol of good-nature and good-temper; sympathetic and fraternal in a rare degree. Moreover, he was bookish in his tastes and tendencies, and few men knew so well the requisites of an attractive, purchasable and presentable volume. But still it was questioned by many whether he possessed the distinctive *charismata* of the book-stewardship—the real marks of the *business man* in his mental composition—in such measure as would mark him out for that peculiar position. Nevertheless, the sagacity of the selection, and the authenticity of the providential indications which directed towards him the eyes of his most keen-sighted and experienced brethren, were notably vindicated by the event. In the qualities with which he had been credited he exceeded all anticipation, whilst he developed others which had been supposed to be the monopoly of men of less vivid imagination and of less fervid temperament. The success of his efforts, through the Divine blessing, supplies the highest evidence of his aptitude and efficiency. Under his administration, during a decade and a half, there were no *benevolences* required from the ministers, in the form of obligatory purchases, such as were often necessary in less favoured times

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whilst our great book establishment attained an unprecedented pitch of productiveness, its financial position was very materially relieved, its subsidies to our necessitous Church funds were largely increased, its relations with the general book-trade extended, an acknowledged improvement was secured at once in the attractiveness and the cheapness of its publications, and its reputation as a great publishing house was conspicuously enhanced. Sensitively loyal, both by constitution and habit, to the traditions as well as to the principles of this great Methodist institution, he was not fettered by them; but in more than one important instance he took the initiative in well-considered re-adjustments.

His success was traceable to a happy blending of caution with enterprise, and a wakeful, solicitous and studious cherishing of the interests confided to his charge. Like the founder of Methodism, who was also the founder of the book-room, he rightly regarded our book affairs as forming an invaluable and indispensable arm of the service, an essential department of the work of God. Hence he felt that he was fulfilling the ministry he had 'received of the Lord Jesus' just as faithfully in discharging the duties of the book-stewardship as in the superintendency of a circuit. The readiness with which a minister so happy in, and so devoted to, his circuit-work undertook, at the call of his brethren, untried responsibilities, involving so great a change in his week-day

occupations, proved how absolutely he was at the disposal of the Church; how 'good at need' for any emergent service; and how faithful had been his yearly covenanting: 'Put me to *what Thou wilt* . . . . spare not to command me.'

So long as his strength permitted—indeed, too long after it began to fail—he made it a point of conscience to preach twice every Sunday, wherever he might best serve Christ and His cause. How completely his heart was still in the work of saving souls was proved by the publication, in 1864, of his very useful little book, 'Saving Truths.' The severe simplicity of the style, the exclusive dealing, in the plainest speech, with the plainest and most practical verities of our religion, show the singleness and directness of his aim and the all-controlling earnestness of his purpose. We know no book of its kind so complete and serviceable as a manual of the 'things that accompany salvation'; not even works which have attained to a wide and long-continued popularity in evangelical Churches. Its utility is not limited by the deficiencies and the one-sidedness which detract so seriously from most other books of its class; and it gives due prominence to 'Union with the Church,' 'Perfect Love' and 'Working for God.'

In 1869, his brethren gave him the highest possible proof of their appreciation of his character and services, and of their confidence in his capacity and trustiness, by electing him to the chair of the Con-

ference. In this testing position he exhibited the high qualities which had placed him there: quiet yet indefatigable attention to duty, equally removed from self-sparing and self-assertion, geniality and equanimity; adding 'to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.' All these graces were in him and did abound. No one could accuse him of over-presiding, and yet he ruled 'with diligence.' He fulfilled his presidential course with the same cheerful conscientiousness and equable energy which characterised his execution of every work entrusted to him by the Church. In his charges, the one delivered at Hanley in 1870, the other at Manchester in 1871, the pervading gravity, solidity and impressiveness befitting such deliverances were relieved by freshness and individuality of treatment, by a seasonable boldness of incidental admonition and instruction, an occasional piquancy and even bitingness of stricture, and flashes of a restrained imaginative eloquence. The Church-principles announced or assumed are purely scriptural. He repudiates a man-made ministry, and insists strongly on 'Christian fellowship and the communion of saints.'

Up to the year of his presidency, Dr. Jobson had been favoured, notwithstanding his prodigal expenditure of strength, with not only unbroken, but even high-toned health. Almost throughout that year, however, he was harassed by a debilitating, though not disabling ailment, unsuspected by any who were

not closely associated with him, as it did not slacken in the slightest degree the energy of his public services. At the Manchester Conference, 1871, after his prodigious effort in the Free Trade Hall, he experienced a very serious and threatening attack of illness, from which, however, he recovered with surprising elasticity. Till the close of the year 1875, his natural force was still unabated. He was still capable of great exertion, with slight and soon-past fatigue. But all at once an anxious and urgent difficulty arose in connection with his own department, awakening in his sensitive though buoyant nature a solicitude which found out the vulnerable part of his constitution. At his very strongest, he had been liable to sleeplessness. In the narratives of his visits to America and the antipodes, we note again and again the record of a whole night's wakefulness before or after some unusually important public service, or as the penalty of too intense or too prolonged excitement. But now unnatural vigilance became habitual. 'Thou holdest mine eyes waking,' was his frequent appeal. His daily expenditure of nervous energy not being recouped at night, the fund was gradually exhausted. As he became conscious of failing strength, and experienced distressing and alarming accesses of extreme weakness, he was led to deep searchings of heart. The results of this solemn scrutiny he freely communicated to us. What he most reproached himself for in his scrutinising

retrospect was the commixture of personal feeling—not personal ambition, but personal affection—with his most laborious services in his Master's cause. He complained of himself, that often in undertaking long journeys and exhausting services, his inducement had been the luxury of renewed intercourse with old friends, as well as the satisfaction of advancing the work of God. This was, indeed, a charge to which Paul might, in a noble sense, plead guilty.

But Dr. Jobson's rest was in tranquil and thankful trust. The last time we saw him—a few days before his fatal seizure—he himself was the visitant. He was full of cheerful acquiescence, light-hearted patience and vivid interest in the affairs of the book-room. His affectionateness and gratitude continued and increased to the very last.

Few Methodist ministers have earned such a strong claim on their sorrowing associates for a faithful and appreciative memorial as Frederick James Jobson. He was himself a master-limner of character and of personal intellectual traits. Few men have drawn so many truthful portraits of fathers and brethren. His sketches of John Smith, Dr. Bunting, Dr. Hannah and Charles Prest are admirable for fidelity of delineation, firmness of outline and sobriety of truth and colouring. No Methodist preacher has been the means of raising so many monuments to departed worth. If he were suffered to pass away without a monumental stone or a portraiture which might tell to future

Methodists what manner of man he was, that would be a ground for as just a lament as Campbell's on the fate of Vancouver, that 'Discovery's son' had found 'an undiscovered grave.' Such a portrait has already been executed by the combined skill of two masters of the art of character-painting, Dr. Osborn and Dr. Pope. Yet the fact of Dr. Jobson's long and close connection with this magazine, of our own colleagueship, extending over a longer term than that of any other man—a period of twelve years, during the ripest season of his life—and of our having been favoured with frequent opportunities of intercourse with him, and of hearing him preach and speak, from his probation to his presidency, and onward to the last, we feel to be an obligation not to close this short sketch of his career without some humble etching of his unique personality.

As to 'his natural face,' the portraits of him in this magazine give a very just idea; that, in 1844, representing him as he appeared in early manhood, and that, in 1871, truthfully exhibiting him as he was at the time of his presidency. In both, the round, full, finely-moulded brow is truthfully suggestive of ideality and general capacity. To the earlier, poetic feeling, affectionateness, winningness and harmless humour give the predominant expression; the later tells more about his characteristic caution, strenuous energy and quiet resolution.

He was blessed with intense vitality, and a large

susceptibility of manifold enjoyment. His fibre, though firm, was fine and flexible. His constitution was well compounded in its combined strength and sensibility. No doubt these natural advantages aided the effect of his Christian graces in their influence and impression upon others; as the purest and intensest light streams most clearly and pleasantly through a lamp of flawless crystal. But exuberant health and a perennial flow of animal spirits bring their own peculiar temptations, and present prominent points of attack, especially when combined with a vivid fancy, quick susceptibilities and a rare capacity for social happiness. We must, therefore, recognise and glorify the grace of God which enabled him to guard against the dangers of his very advantages, the weaknesses which cling to all human strength. As we have seen, his conversion was marked and radical, his repentance keen and searching, his faith realistic, his justification conscious, his passing from death unto life a veritable and conspicuous transformation. There was nothing about it vague or indecisive. Though it took captive his imagination, it brought no illusions; whilst strongly emotional, it was neither evanescent nor intermittent. His character was based upon experience; his experience on the grand historical, unchanging facts of Christianity. Thus its foundations were deep and broad and strong. His godliness was earnest and eminently happy. Religion was to him no sour kill-joy. Happy himself, he longed to see and make all others happy, as far as in

him lay. Our own impression of his character, received by close association with him during the last years of his life, was that the Christianity exhibited in his spirit and his habits was of a very high type; if the true standard be the description of charity in 1 Corinthians xiii. The leading features of his character were forbearance and kindliness. Envy, pretentiousness, self-inflation, unbecomingness, self-seeking, touchiness, 'evil surmising' and censoriousness were conspicuously absent, being supplanted by the contrasted positive virtues: a glad recognition of good in others, and a regretful reticence as to their faults; patience under provocation, trustfulness and hopefulness in cases which seemed to most men desperate. These qualities made him one of the choicest colleages, most pleasant co-workers and most charming companions that could be well conceived. It was delightful to be his fellow-traveller on a missionary deputation, or to stay at the same house with him during Conference. He was much more affluent than ostentatious in his colloquial resources; much more intent on drawing out the stores of others than on displaying his own. He had none of the eagerness which spoils so many good talkers. He had no taste for monologue in social intercourse, but was a master in the art of listening.

Allusion having been made, in both Dr. Pope's sermon and this sketch, to those delightful gatherings at his house of ministers of different denominations,

an account of one of them, at which we had the privilege of being present, will doubtless interest our readers. During the London Conference of 1872, Dr. Jobson invited five eminent Nonconformist ministers —Drs. Binney, Stoughton, Raleigh, Allon and Fraser —to meet at his house the president (Rev. Luke Wiseman), and a few other members of the Conference. After dinner, Dr. Jobson characteristically said: 'Why should we not have a love-feast? Come, Brother Allon, tell us how you were brought to God.'

Dr. Allon replied*: 'I was brought up in the Established Church; but, during the whole of that time, I had no idea of such a thing as spiritual religion—a personal experience of the truths of Christianity. But I was induced to go to the Methodist chapel, in Beverley, was convinced of sin, and was led to religious decision, more especially by the preaching of the Rev. John Hobkirk, and joined the class in which Mrs. Jobson met, and became a Methodist Sunday-school teacher and secretary.'

Dr. Raleigh spoke next: 'I was a regular attendant in my youth on the ministry of Dr. Kelly, in Liverpool; and you all know what a vigorous preacher he was. But I did not find my way to Christ under his preaching, but in the Wesleyan chapel, Moss Street (Brunswick), Liverpool, where I had been led

* The statements of the surviving ministers, Drs. Allon, Stoughton and Fraser, have been submitted to each of them respectively, and are published with their full approval.

at first to hear Theophilus Lessey, by whose preaching I was greatly impressed. But it was after attending several times and hearing various preachers in that chapel that I learnt the way of faith.'

Then Dr. Stoughton stated that he had been brought up amidst Methodist influences, and that when a youth he came under deep convictions of sin, and was for some time in a state of spiritual anxiety and sorrow; that one Sunday morning he walked into the country, outside the city of Norwich, and there read a sermon by Dr. Chalmers on the text: 'He that spared not His own Son, etc.' The sermon afforded him considerable relief; but in the evening of the same day, on attending St. Peter's Wesleyan chapel, he heard an unknown minister of humble abilities, who preached from: 'God so loved the world, etc.' That sermon brought him still more comfort and peace than he had derived from the great Scotch divine, much as he admired him. Dr. Stoughton went on to say that, shortly afterwards, he became a member of the Methodist society, and met in the same class with Mr. Wiseman, father of the president. It was not until a few years subsequently that Dr. Stoughton altered his ecclesiastical views, and joined an Independent Church; and he remembered that, after he became a minister, he met Mr. Wiseman at a missionary meeting, who, referring to some verses he had just heard quoted by his friend, expressed pleasure 'that he had not forgotten his Methodist hymns.'

Mr. Binney stated that his father, although deacon of a Presbyterian Church in Newcastle, 'was never in his life worth more than a guinea a week.' The direct instrumentality in his conversion was not Presbyterian, but Wesleyan. His educational advantages had been scanty; and he had grown up to young manhood in a state of spiritual and intellectual torpor. He was a journeyman bookbinder, but knew little of the contents of books till a Wesleyan fellow-workman succeeded in arousing him to religious thoughtfulness by first alluring him to mental activity. In young Binney's case, as in that of some others, the intellectual awakening preceded the spiritual: literature was the 'schoolmaster' to bring him to Christ. His studious Methodist fellow-workman lent him one day a copy of Dr. Johnson's 'Rambler,' from the library of Wesley's Orphan House, in Newcastle. The perusal of this book enkindled in him an enthusiastic desire for culture and literary occupation. He forthwith bought a dictionary, and wrote out all the words occurring in the 'Rambler' with which he was previously unacquainted, and produced an essay in which he took care to introduce every one of these newly-acquired vocables. Such was Thomas Binney's first composition. His second and third were ambitious poetical effusions—a tragedy in five acts and a poem on 'The Divine Attributes,' which he dedicated to the Duke of Wellington. The intellectual companionship between him and the bookish young Wesleyan soon

ripened into a religious friendship. Binney accompanied his brother workman to Methodist preachings and love-feasts. For a long time, however, the literary interest predominated over the spiritual; it was by slow degrees that the latter at last gained the ascendency. Ultimately, he neither joined the Church of his parentage nor that of his conversion, neither the Presbyterian nor the Wesleyan community. Had Methodism at that time possessed a school of the prophets, he had little doubt that he should have attached himself to the Methodist society, and offered himself for the Methodist ministry; for his theological views and his religious sympathies were far more in accordance with Methodism than with any other form of Christianity. But his craving for culture was so intense, and his sense of the need of it so profound, that when the prospect of some years' training was presented to him by the Congregationalists, he joined their community, and was soon after sent to the Independent College near Hitchin.

Dr. Fraser spoke last, and said: 'I had often been urged to devote myself to the ministry, but from various causes refused to do so. One morning, however, a Wesleyan lady at Montreal, at whose house I happened to call, surprised me by saying that she had a solemn message for me. She then looked me calmly in the face, and said: 'Mr. Fraser, I have a burden from God, which I must lay upon you—that you give up all other views in life, and preach the Gospel.' Her

words seemed to penetrate my spirit. I immediately proceeded to complete my studies for the ministry, and began to exercise it at Montreal, where I laboured for seven years. When a good many years had elapsed, I revisited that city from this country. On meeting the same lady, I reminded her of her former charge, when she said: 'I have another." I listened with some misgiving. But she continued: "It is, 'Thou shalt not kill.' You are to minister, but you are not to kill yourself with excursion work.' I sometimes think that this burden might with advantage be laid on some ministers of her own community.'

Truly, this was a delightful Christian symposium; a feast of charity of the olden type. And what an illustration of the influence of Methodism on other Christian communities!

Dr. Jobson's peculiar excellences as a preacher and a speaker have been already touched upon: his simplicity, earnestness, fervour, imaginativeness and impetuosity. His style was easy and inartificial, though so often remarkable for pregnancy and pictorial power. Thought, fancy, feeling, all seemed interfused. The stream of his eloquence had its source amongst the hills, and would overflow 'all its banks.' At first slow, struggling, gurgling, its course soon became strong and sweeping. Often flinging itself fearlessly over weir or lin, its headlong volume and velocity were always made to do good work: to grind the corn or to drive productive enginery.

Zealous as he was, there was no harsh heat in his most terrible appeals. A passage in his Ex-Presidential Charge is highly descriptive of his own spirit and habits: 'When you sound forth the thunders of Divine wrath against the impenitent, let the raindrops fall; and always set the bow in the cloud. . . . Bid despair avaunt from the breast of the most heavy-laden transgressor.'

But it must not be forgotten that no general description of Dr. Jobson's preaching can represent with precise accuracy any one of his discourses. His preaching was more remarkable for diversity than that of any man we ever heard. In fact, we never heard from his lips two sermons that were very much alike in matter, mood or treatment. One, preached at a village chapel opening, we have already described. Of a widely different class was his 'first sermon in Australia,' from the first thirteen verses of the hundred and third Psalm. That sermon we heard him preach a few months earlier to a handful of people on a week-day afternoon at Pontypool. For exquisite simplicity of thought and illustration, for idiomatic purity of language, for home-coming, heart-melting pathos, for closely-concatenated exposition, eliciting the sense of Scripture, verse by verse, we never heard or read its like. The same impression was produced at the college chapel, Richmond, where it was delivered still nearer to the date of his embarkation. No wonder that, with its well-selected accompanying hymns, it

produced, on such an occasion, the effect which is described in Dr. Jobson's 'Australia, etc.' (pp. 112, 113): '. . . The vast assembly sprinkled all over with countenances familiar to me, from preaching in different parts of our parent country; so that on a careful computation afterwards made, it was reckoned that I knew one-third of the whole, either in their own faces or their family likenesses. The effect of a voice familiar to so many of them, and calling up . . . a host of home associations, was indescribably exciting. In all directions eyes gushed with tears; faces flushed and quivered with emotion; and a sigh of deep feeling heaved and swayed the mighty mass until it waved before and around the preacher, like the swelling billows of a sea.'

The sermon he delivered in the same chapel on the evening of the same day—which we heard afterwards in London—on 'the Lamb . . . in the midst of the throne,' was of an entirely diverse type. It was pictorial and imaginative in a very high degree; the nearest approach to florid rhetoric or decorative oratory we ever heard from him. Of quite another style was his, in every respect, fine sermon preached at the college chapel at the Sheffield Conference, 1863, from 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?' As a forth-putting of manifold intellectual force and of imagination as distinguished from fancy,

combined with fervid evangelism and discriminating zeal, this was the noblest emanation of his genius (justifying the use of that word) we ever heard from him. His Sunday evening sermon at Redruth, during the last Camborne Conference, from: 'My son, give Me thine heart,' had all the impassioned fervour, the redundant poetry and the vehemence of delivery which characterised his earliest ministry. The effect on the vast Cornish congregation was such as might have been expected.

His sermons of one class, however—his Funeral Sermons—were remarkably alike, in tone, though not in thought. But they were as strikingly unlike his other discourses. In our judgment they were models for sermons on occasions of such solemnity and sadness, both in manner and in matter: grave, surcharged with subdued feeling and in absolute good taste. No play of fancy here; no profaning of a brother's bier into the rostrum of the rhetorician. Imagination stood aside, a mute, veiled mourner. He was well worthy of the degree of Doctor in Divinity, by conferring which his American brethren showed their high estimate of his pulpit-power.

As was to be assumed, especially in the case of a man of Dr. Jobson's temperament, his preaching was unequal both on ordinary and on his special occasions. He sometimes fell as far below his average excellence as at others he rose high above it.

To his administrative ability, those best qualified to

judge have given the firmest testimony. He never shrank from any service which his brethren requested him to undertake. As a treasurer of Church funds, he served God with his '*spirit*' as well as 'in the Gospel of His Son.' In this point, as in the rest of its economy, Methodism follows Apostolic principles or precedents. St. Paul insisted on a colleague or colleagues in the stewardship of a Church-collection; but he did not decline to share the task with an accredited associate. (1 Corinthians xvi. 3, 4; 2 Corinthians viii. 18—21; Acts xxiv. 17.)

With regard to his ability and prospects as an artist and an architect, we need only say that his genius was discerned and directed in very early life by no less a painter than Hilton, and that in the practical study of ecclesiastical architecture he was the associate of Pugin, occasionally.

Of Dr. Jobson as a superintendent, it will be enough to give the testimony of one of his colleagues during his first superintendency, that of the Rev. Thomas Akroyd. Our readers must feel that this imperfect sketch could not be more fittingly closed than by these touching words.

'The name of Dr. Jobson will ever be to me the symbol of all that is sweet and precious in human character as cleansed and beautified by the grace of God. To have known and loved him, and to have been honoured by his affection and confidence in return, appreciably heightens my self-respect and enhances to me the value of my own life.

'I became personally acquainted with him in 1852, when I was appointed to the Lambeth Circuit. He was its superintendent; our other colleagues being the sweet and saintly Thomas Nightingale, the manly and never-to-be-forgotten Luke Wiseman and the zealous and truly fraternal George Scott. Among its men of "light and leading" were John and Edward Corderoy, Christopher Gabriel, John Fletcher Bennett, Thomas Gurney, Richard and James Nash, James Hooker and Benjamin Gough. With one exception—that of John Corderoy (*clarum et venerabile nomen!*), whom may God long spare and richly bless!—"they are all gone into the world of light." They were all "good men and true." At the same time, they were—most of them, at all events—men of sharply-marked individuality and independence of character, and not by any means wanting in "the courage of their convictions." It needed, therefore, that their superintendent should be "able to hold his own," and to produce his "strong reasons" for it. Dr. Jobson was equal to the need. By an adequate knowledge of our Methodist economy, by a never-absent cautiousness, by the prestige of his power in the pulpit, by the contagiousness of his inborn and unfailing good-nature, and, above all, by the moral force of a prayer-fed religious earnestness which all could feel, he succeeded both in maintaining the order and peace of the circuit and in leading it on to those aggressive movements which have resulted in the manifold developments of recent years.

'Over our brotherhood in the united pastorate of that circuit no shade ever passed. There were no misunderstandings to correct, no grievances to redress. Dr. Jobson rejoiced in the successes of his colleagues, as he sympathised with them in their trials and discouragements. Towards myself in particular his bearing was not merely kindly, it was distinctly affec-

tionate. He treated me with a sympathetic gentleness which wholly won my heart and bound me to him for ever. The total and now the abiding impression left upon my mind by our departed friend is that of a personality altogether unique, singularly attractive, and as exemplary as that of mortal man beneath the skies may hope to be. And so, with many more, I bring my little stone and lay it on his cairn. I thank God for that chapter in a dear and ennobling friendship that has now closed; "and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come."'

[* My dear husband began to feel the severe effects of over-work, in January, 1877; and was unable to quit his bed through almost the whole of that month. When recovered, he makes the following entry in his journal:

'From recent indisposition and much suffering through sleeplessness, I am convinced that the time approaches when I must be relieved from the pressure of official service at the Conference Office, and prepare for a calm evening of life. I have spent forty-three years of ministerial life, mostly in prominent and public service; and, in connection with it, had thirteen years of special service at the Conference, which have at times, and of late, pressed heavily upon me. I have not, as yet, relaxed my public services in the pulpit, and would not do so, but when absolutely necessary. I shall, by God's help, continue them as long and as fully as health and time possibly admit.'

And then he falls again into his usual severity towards himself; that strict scrutiny of his life-course

which had become habitual with him. It is the last entry in his journal which is marked by reflection.

'In my forced retirement with recent affliction,' he observes, 'I have had opportunity for self-examination, and have found myself defective in all things before God, and utterly unworthy of the least of His mercies. My past life and services are full of sin and self; and, in the review of them, I abhor myself in dust and ashes. I must have greater simplicity and purer sincerity of motive in working for God. I see that truth and uprightness before God and man are essentials for acceptable service; and these qualities, by Divine grace, in dependence on the atonement of Christ, and with the help and influence of the Holy Spirit, I must seek and cultivate. This I am resolved to do. And, in doing it, I must examine myself more frequently and more searchingly.

'Now, O God of infinite goodness and mercy, Who hast preserved me to this time, and borne so long with my unfaithfulness and unprofitableness,—and Who hast graciously heard my cry, and again healed my disease, —vouchsafe to me the aid I need, and save me daily, fully, and for ever! Sinful as I have been, and though I have broken all past vows and covenants, yet, coming through the sacrificial atonement and meritorious intercession of Thy Own beloved Son and my Saviour, I dare to renew my covenant with Thee, and again to seal myself Thine. And may the covenant thus made on earth be ratified in heaven! Amen and Amen.'

In 1878, a failure of the left eye led him to consult Dr. Critchett, who said there was congealed blood at the back of the eye, and gave him little hope of relief. We felt, however, that it was urgently necessary he should have such relief as he could have.

So, in August, we had another Scottish tour, in the course of which we visited Staffa and Iona, the isle of Skye, and the Gairloch. My dear husband, it will easily be supposed, had rich enjoyment in viewing these beautiful scenes and sketching many of them. In allusion to the increasing dimness of his eyesight, he says: 'This is admonitory to me, in that I hear a voice saying, "Prepare to meet thy God!" I would hearken to that voice. Holy Spirit, help me so to do!'

His journal for 1879 contains little but short notes on his loss of sleep, and consultation with medical men. He assisted in administering the Lord's Supper on the last day of August, and it cheered him much, for he observes—'This, after silence from January 12th! I hope to be able to preach again.'

But his preaching and journalising were both ended. His memory grew weaker, and the overwrought brain often took away the words he wanted to utter, so that he could not finish a sentence when he attempted to converse. This was so painful to him, that I was compelled to admit few and fewer callers—even kind and good friends—to see him. One of these friends, whose attachment to my dear husband has lasted fifty years, says, "I shall never forget the look of earnest entreaty with which he said, "Pray, pray!"'

On the morning of his last Sunday on earth, I proposed that we should hold a short service together.

I read to him the Psalms for the day, a short sermon, and then knelt down by his bedside and prayed. His responses were frequent; and his happy soul burst forth in the words, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy Name'! I assisted him to recall the Psalm to memory, and so we got through several verses.

Being January 2nd, I reminded him, in the afternoon, that it was Covenant Sunday. 'O yes!' he exclaimed with fervour, 'I give myself wholly to Christ!'

In the evening he grew more and more feeble, yet I ventured to say to him, 'Shall we hold another short service?' 'Yes,' he said, 'a short one.' I read a little to him—in short portions; and then prayed again with him. But I saw that he was now fast sinking. The final seizure came about midnight, and he, then, sank into unconsciousness. At four o'clock in the morning, January 4th, 1881, my dear husband gently ceased to breathe.]

Funeral Address

BY

THE REV. GEORGE OSBORN, D.D.

I STAND here to-day, not by my own choice, but in response to a request which I felt that I could not refuse, the request of one whose wish was law to our departed friend; and I am very jealous over my own heart, lest a partiality, the growth of more than forty years' friendship, should lead me somewhat beyond the strict line of truth and accuracy. I speak, however, to those who know that whatever good we find, or believe we find, in themselves or others, is due not to them but to the grace which was in them; and who will give to the Giver of every good and perfect gift the glory for that abundant grace bestowed upon our dear friend around whose corpse we are met to-day. We mourn a public as well as a private loss; we 'remember' one to whom the apostolic command literally applies: 'Remember them who were your rulers, who spoke to you the word of God;' living we are to obey them, departed we are to remember them. Such is the apostolic command. A ruler—at home, in his own private and personal sphere, in the department entrusted to his care, in the Connexion to

which he was so devotedly attached—everywhere a ruler, a guide, a leader; a great man has fallen in Israel!

And how came he to be a ruler, a prince? In virtue of that law which he himself so well expounded in preaching the funeral sermon of another great man and prince in Israel, the late Rev. Thomas Jackson: 'He that will be great among you let him be your minister, and he that is chief as he that doth serve.' He came to be a ruler by being a servant—a diligent, conscientious, faithful, humble, laborious servant of the Church; there was nothing too good for him at the end because he thought nothing too little for him at the beginning. He never stood upon his dignity, but he found, as we might expect him to find, that honours followed on humility. It is not given to many of the servants of the Church to combine in their own persons qualifications for so many kinds of service as it was, in the providence of God, given to him to exemplify: every kind of talent was in its turn called into requisition, and freely—and I will say gladly—devoted to the service of the Church of Christ.

As his history has been read, if not 'in a nation's' at least in a Church's 'eyes,' I do not feel it needful to enter into great detail this morning. Born or brought up, as you well know, in the city of Lincoln; born of parents who, though converted in the Established Church, were led soon afterwards to join the Methodist Society, and became pillars and ornaments of it for

many years; he was brought up strictly and in the fear of God, the child of many prayers from his birth. He did not all at once respond to the pains that were taken with him; he went far astray in his early life, as some of you may have heard him tell, but he was recovered in answer to parental prayers, and, by the grace of God, deeply convinced of sin. When he was admitted into full connexion he told us how he came to find peace with God. It was not in any of the ordinary means of grace; but while looking at a picture of the sufferings of Christ his thoughts were strongly directed to the Crucified, and he sat down and collated all the Gospel narratives of the crucifixion, and began to meditate upon them and revolve them in his mind, until their sprang up in his heart the blessed persuasion that He who hung on the cross hung there on his account, and died to give him life. So in the exercise of a personal faith he found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and the burden of guilt was gone. He immediately began to address himself to those who had been his gay companions, to tell them of what had happened to him, and seek their welfare too. Some of them he had the comfort of seeing brought to the enjoyment of the same salvation as himself. His conversion being so clear and decided, taking such a fast hold of his emotional nature from the very beginning, gave a great and very marked tinge to his whole character, and influenced from the beginning his desire to preach; for when he saw the

cross of Christ in its true light he felt the evil of sin as he had never felt it before, and the misery of sinners as he had never felt it before, and he began to think he could spend his life in testifying of the love of that Saviour who had snatched him as a brand from the burning. Thus the desire to testify of the love which he had so sweetly experienced prompted him to begin to preach. He had the advantage of a good education, a liberal training; he was articled to one of the liberal professions, where he had opportunities for the development of his natural faculties and tastes, and was in a manner ready for his work; his education for his profession, added to his education at home, giving him a degree of fitness which many young men do not possess, and he was sent almost at once into the work. When he was twenty-two years of age he found himself appointed to a circuit, where he rose, almost at a bound, to the height of popularity. The fervour of his spirit, the intensity of his zeal, the geniality and sweetness of his temper, the amount of information which he possessed, and his resolute determination to consecrate every faculty and every gift to the service of his Lord, were all the elements of a genuine and well-warranted popularity—a popularity which astonished himself and astonished everybody else. After a single year in his first circuit he came direct to one of the most important circuits in the Connexion, and found himself surrounded by the venerated elders of our body; men of the very first

class among the thousands of the Methodist Societies for their intelligence, their zeal, their devotion, and their fidelity, and among them he forthwith took his stand, winning their love and esteem, and never forfeiting it to the end of his long career. It was a great mercy for him that in the Third Manchester Circuit he was brought into immediate fellowship with James Wood, and Chappell, and John Fernley, and others who have passed away—as well as some who remain—in intercourse with whom his judgment was rapidly ripened, his views enlarged, and from whom he received guidance and help. And the grace of God was upon him in those early days. How well I remember, first, his almost unbounded popularity—of which I think I had never witnessed a parallel instance—then his devoted love to his work; his insatiable appetite for usefulness in the Christian ministry; and the modesty with which he bore the honours which came upon him, which to so many young men might have proved dangerous, but which he came through unharmed, meekly bearing all his honours to the end as he had done at the beginning. Every one knows how many snares beset the popular preacher; of all the preachers who need to be prayed for—and they all need to be prayed for—the most popular preacher most needs the prayers of the people. But by the grace of God he held on his way, never unduly seeming elated, never assuming anything, never undervaluing those less gifted than himself, nor making the preaching

of occasional sermons and various extra efforts excuses for neglecting circuit duty.

I never had a more faithful and diligent colleague —and I was at different times his colleague and his superintendent—so I had the means of knowing how faithfully he laboured, how diligently he studied, how earnestly he prayed, how kindly he sympathised, how faithfully he maintained our discipline as a holy trust committed to us in the providence of God. It was for his advantage in this respect that he was early appointed where he had the means of seeing the mischief resulting from attempts to break down our discipline. The next generation will hardly believe that an attempt to impart an improved training and preparation for the ministry to our junior ministers was, forty years ago, or a little more, the signal for an outbreak of Antinomianism which threatened the ruin of our Connexion. He had the means of seeing how great mischief was then wrought, and the effect of it was never lost upon him; his fidelity to the cause to which he had pledged himself was, no doubt, strengthened and intensified by what he saw of the sorrowful effects of attempting to subvert the godly discipline which had been established amongst us, and he administered it afterwards as a conscientious duty, kindly but firmly, wherever he went.

I call to mind as a special feature deserving commemoration on an occasion like this, with grateful remembrance (on the part of his brethren especially),

how on a subsequent occasion, when a still more sorrowful and still wider experience of the same nature was, in the providence of God, allotted to us, his heart went out in sympathy and effort towards his distressed brethren, and how very kindly and faithfully and diligently he ministered to their necessities, and sought to alleviate their sorrows. In the days of calm I cannot forget those holy qualities, in him, as in many others, by which the good ship was enabled to weather the storm which threatened at one time to overwhelm it. The Lord was with him in a remarkable manner during that most trying period; and as, on the one hand, I do not remember that his cheerfulness ever degenerated into trifling, so, on the other hand, I do not remember that his firmness ever degenerated into acerbity. By the grace of God he held fast the truth in love.

Wisdom in administration was another of those gifts for which we may well glorify God on the part of our departed friend. For a man of so genial a temperament, of so warm an imagination, of such sensibility, I do not remember ever to have known a man of more cool judgment; he had the faculty of looking all round a subject, and of putting himself in the place of an opponent, and of different persons in his consideration of them. Very much of the blessing which rested upon the labours of his life was owing, no doubt, to the calmness and consideration with which his opinions were formed; for he took pains to form

an opinion, and did not hastily rush to conclusions on any subject. Although this often involved labour on his part, he grudged no labour that might be necessary to the welfare of the cause of Christ, and he often took from the night what the duties of the day did not allow him to give to study and devotion and retired pursuits necessary to the efficiency of the Christian ministry. God was often glorified in him on this account—that he *would* have time to reflect, time to prepare, time to digest his thoughts, time to meditate as to the matter and spirit of his preaching; and so, when he came to the pulpit, he often came as Moses came down from the mount, and the spiritually-minded might see his face shining with the reflected radiance of his heavenly Father's countenance. It is a pleasant memory to me, and it will be a pleasant memory to many of you also, how, when, as the poet says he had

> 'Mingled with the skies,
> And filled his urn where those pure waters rise,'

they flowed forth fresh and sweet as from the throne of God and the Lamb. He was mighty in prayer, because he practised it where no ear heard and no eye saw, and the open reward was in the power that was granted in public.

What shall I say of his preaching? Dear old George Herbert says: 'The country parson preacheth frequently. It was not a tale of bricks to be delivered, it was a blessed service to be rendered with joy.

'The pulpit,' he goes on to say—and I was strongly reminded of his words as I sat and listened, as I occasionally and but occasionally did, to my dear friend—'the pulpit is his joy and his throne.' No words could better express the case of him whom we mourn to-day. The pulpit was his joy. He felt the love of God for perishing sinners, he felt the sweetness of pardoning love, he felt the honour of being an ambassador for Christ, and his whole soul poured itself out on his congregation, as I do not need to tell you at length. The truth radiated through his understanding, it burnt upon his imagination, it kindled all his affections, it throbbed, I may almost say, through every vein of his body. O it was a blessed thing for him that he had so clear and distinct a sense of pardoning mercy at the beginning, and was enabled to preserve the freshness of that original impression through so many years by constantly repeated acts of faith and love to his dying Lord, so that the old Methodist testimony in his hands never degenerated, was never weakened or watered down. He did not deal in hypothetical statements, or in great ratiocination, or in profound research, or in questionable speculation; he did not discuss at length the niceties of casuistry; he soared above all this, and brought the living message of a living Saviour, the glad tidings of great joy to all people; he showed men how they were glad tidings to every man, and what glad tidings they were, and how it was the bounden duty of every

man to receive, and submit to, and embrace the Saviour who had saved him. The joy of the old Methodists rang through his sermons.

> 'How can a sinner know
> His sin on earth forgiven?'

was the question of questions to them, as it was eighteen hundred years ago: a question that cannot be postponed or superseded by all the discoveries of the nineteenth century; a question which Methodists have it in charge from God to answer in one way, everywhere and always—

> 'How can a sinner know
> His sins on earth forgiven?
> How can my gracious Saviour show
> My name inscribed in heaven?'

That is the problem for every one; yes, for every one who hears us to-day; and it can never vary while sun and moon endure. God grant us never to forget that, and never to substitute anything else for it!

And here is the answer—

> 'What we have felt and seen
> With confidence we tell,
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible.'

Infallible? yes, *Infallible!* Here is certainty, find it where you can elsewhere. Here doubt is vanquished; here unbelief is overcome; here the quest for peace is satisfied.

> 'What we have felt and seen
> With confidence we tell.'

I may appeal to you and thousands beside, whether this spirit did not actuate the whole ministry of my dear friend? From first to last this true apostolic precedent was followed: '*We know* that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness, and *we know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and the eternal life.' Blessed be God for this prominent feature of our dear friend's ministry. Blessed be God for the blessing that accompanied it, for souls converted, and wanderers brought back, and believers built up, for more than forty years. Blessed be God for the consecration of all those varied gifts with unvarying diligence to the great work of the Christian ministry and the welfare of His Church!

Blessed be God also that the peace which marked his life marked also his end. When men suffer from paralysis you do not expect them to be very triumphant; it is another class of diseases that gives scope for the expression of another class of feelings on the part of the Christian; but he died in the peace and hope of the Gospel, thankful for all the mercies of God, trusting in the same Saviour whose sufficiency he had proved all his life through; without a fear and without a pang he has yielded up his spirit and gone to be with Christ, which is better. Far better! 'much more better!' how much better who

can say? 'If ye love me,' said our Lord Himself, 'ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father.' And so, dear friend, because we loved thee, we should rejoice that thou art gone to the Father; we could ill spare thee, but He who holds the stars in His right hand knows best. He who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks does not allow the lights to be casually or heedlessly extinguished. Thou, O Christ, art Lord of the dead and the living, and in thy hands are the keys of death and Hades. It ill becomes his fellow-servants to grudge his earlier entrance upon the great reward; and if we would fain have kept him, we yet know Thy sovereign right, and bow before Thy gracious Majesty. Whether we live or die we are the Lord's. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.

Memorial Sketch

BY

THE REV. W. B. POPE, D.D.

DURING the preceding discourse little or no direct allusion has been made to that departed servant of Christ for whose faithful and finished course we this day glorify God. But he has been much in our thoughts. Point after point in St. Paul's plea for a self-forgetting, self-renouncing, self-sacrificing ministry to the Lord Jesus must have brought the late Dr. Jobson vividly before our minds. You will remember that at the outset I proposed to make his character contribute to the application; in fact, the sermon was prepared with that end in view. Not, of course, as the ultimate end: he who is gone would, while he lived, and most certainly would now, if we could hear his voice, implore the preacher to say nothing concerning him for his honour, but all for the good of the brethren whom he loved, and the glory of the Master Whom he loved still more.

I am in other respects restrained. Memorials of Dr. Jobson have already in abundance been penetrating to all the homes—and I may say all the hearts—of the Methodist people. A most genial and instruc-

tive memoir, which bids fair to be exhaustive, is now in course of publication in the pages of the magazine. On occasion of his funeral a comprehensive tribute was paid to his memory by the man who was best fitted to pay such a tribute; and who ought—humanly speaking—to have occupied this place to-day. Finally, it is only right for me to add that I have been suddenly called to this service, and have not been furnished with such materials as are generally provided on an occasion like this; a lack that affects me all the more because it was not my happiness until recent years to have any personal knowledge of Dr. Jobson. Not that I complain. However hard the task, I could not shrink from it; rather do I regard it as an honour to be thought worthy to render such a service. But this will be a sufficient reason for the biographical scantiness of my memorial, and an explanation of my keeping the discourse so much in view.

Dr. Jobson—I may now call him Frederick James Jobson—came early to that most solemn judgment concerning the vicarious atonement and the claims of the Redeemer which was the turning point of his whole life. Some precious benefits of the great sacrifice he had enjoyed before; for his parents, Methodists in Lincoln, had dedicated him to God, and prayed over his childhood and youth with that kind of importunity which seldom fails with heaven. The youth resisted the grace that drew him to the Saviour, and plunged heedlessly into sinful courses. But the

spirit of conviction, under John Smith's preaching, filled him with deep sorrow for those sins. The history of the process by which he came to a clear view of Christ's work for Him is deeply interesting. He carried a load of anxiety long, and found no relief in the ordinary means of grace. One day, however, while painting a picture of the Saviour standing before Pilate, his thoughts were suddenly and strongly directed to the Crucified; he was led to study Gospel narratives of the crucifixion, to meditate upon them and revolve them in his mind, until there sprang up in his heart the persuasion that He who hung upon the cross—One for all—hung there on his account, and died to give him life. I want no better illustration of my text than that. The youth was pierced by those arrows from the cross that are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, but which are tokens of love to turn enemies into friends. That look at the Crucified is very affecting to think of: it was of such a kind as to print the cross on his heart for ever. He was taken captive first by his suffering Saviour, and then devoted himself to the same Saviour ascended and glorified. He never afterwards swerved from his devotion: with more or less intensity and fervour he was the Lord's for ever. He had very soon to apologise to his old companions for the great change that made him give up their society; but his was the apology of St. Paul: he was constrained to preach to them the Gospel that had changed his life and made him new.

On his conversion at the age of seventeen, he gave himself to the service of Christ for life. The 'henceforth,' beginning so early, included all the rest of his time, which nearly reached the term of seventy years. During his entire career he was, so far as human eye might see and human estimate might pronounce, faithful to the supreme law of Christianity: not self, but Christ. That was the deliberate 'judgment' which governed all. I say nothing about the secret warfare between this high spiritual judgment and the mind of the flesh crucified but not dead; nor about the slow but sure and finally perfect victory that the Lord within him gained. It is enough in this public tribute that we glorify God for a long life which was ruled by one great principle. To become a minister of the Gospel he gave up his profession of an architect, to which he was much attached, with all prospect of worldly advancement, and joined the company of Methodist preachers, for nearly fifty years labouring among them, without sparing himself or seeking his own ease. Methodism was to him a sphere wherein he might promote the kingdom of the Redeemer; and, while it was always to his mind very subordinate to that kingdom, he considered the various work that it gave him to do as no other than his vocation according to the will of God. He laboured for thirty years in its service, during which the power and blessing of his ministry were felt in Manchester and several of the great Yorkshire centres; but most of all in London.

I believe he was in this circuit for three terms of three years; so that, as he used to say, he had preached more sermons within City Road Chapel than any one man since Mr. Wesley's day. He did not occupy much in the lower and rougher regions of the Connexion, simply because he was not sent to them. Nor did he labour in as many places as most preachers of his standing, simply because he was so often called back to the same circuits. But he gave a wonderful amount of time and of strength to the cause as a pleader on missionary platforms; and this made him known to almost every corner of the land.

Again and again he went in the service of the body to foreign parts. In 1856 he was the companion of Dr. Hannah to America, and laboured hard to make his mission profitable. No one can even glance at his published record of that deputation without seeing that Dr. Jobson did not make his own pleasure the end of his visit, but worked diligently for the good of others, and not without much self-sacrifice. At a later time he was sent to visit Australia, and the missions in the southern part of the world; and the extraordinary toils of that expedition, with its ungrudging expenditure of physical and intellectual energy, cannot be accounted for on any other principle than that of self given up to the service of Christ in His Church.

In 1864 he was selected for one of the most important and difficult functions of the Methodist

economy, that of the stewardship of its book-room and its general literature: a post which he occupied until the last Conference, and can scarcely be said to have vacated when he died. During those fifteen years he set his heart, not upon personal interest or honour, or even the carrying out of plans of which self had the suggestion; but upon the improvement of our publications generally, the advantage of the funds specially interested in the success of the book-room, the dignity and prosperity of the Connexion, and, I say once more, ultimately and supremely the will and the glory of his Lord in heaven. Perhaps, if he had minded self more a few years ago, when the pressure of circumstances involving the interest of the book-room began to seriously disturb his rest, he might have been with us still. But it is useless to speak of that. The point I would impress is that we have this day to glorify God in the remembrance of a course which began, continued, and ended with what I cannot help calling a noble and rather uncommon devotedness to the Lord and His cause. Further illustration might have been gathered from his generous use of private property; the value of money seemed in his eyes to be the power it gives of doing acts of considerate kindness to brethren in distress. Much is known about this, but I have reason to believe very far from all; indeed, the best part of it is kept only in one record, but that a very safe one. Dr. Jobson has finished a course that was not run 'to himself.' I am

not required to praise and exalt him as a perfect model of absolute self-sacrifice. There is only One Name given under heaven among men that will bear that. But I am required to pay the tribute due to one who has left us a good example of fidelity. The Methodist people expect it, for they know how he spent and was spent for them. His ministerial brethren expect it, for they know that they never had a more unselfish friend; and they raised him, in due course, to the presidency in token of their confidence and love. Above all, his Master expects it, who bids us remember and follow the faith of those rulers in the Church the end of whose conversation was Himself.

We have not lately lost any public man from our ranks of whom it was more signally true that 'the love of Christ constrained' him. Whatever close exposition may say, we understand by this the energy of Christ's zeal entering into His servant, and making him exceedingly fervent. Of course, the fervour takes various forms, according to the natural constitution of the man. There are many types of fervour. Dr. Jobson's was a noble one. He had all the elements that go to the preparation of a Christian orator, and they were so combined that everything prophesied of him that he might become a very mighty preacher. He had a good intellect, fairly trained, and an admirable command of racy English. His sensibilities were exquisitely susceptible, and ready to be played on

through the entire gamut of emotion, from the light gleam of humour up to the wildest passion. His imagination and his fancy were far beyond the average, and trained for higher and lower service by an intense early devotion to art. Now, when these endowments and faculties were seized by the energy of the love of Christ, they threw out very soon their noble music. The tradition of his early pulpit and platform eloquence is something wonderful: not merely as to its popularity and command of crowds, but also as to its real power over the hearts and lives of men, or, in other words, its usefulness in the direct service of the Gospel.

Dr. Jobson retained the passion and self-abandonment of his pulpit or public efforts longer than most men; only a year or two before his decease he was in the habit of taking two services on the Sunday, each of which—as some of us here can testify—seemed enough for most men's one single effort. Of course that extreme and almost preternatural tension—which on more than one occasion awakened anxiety for the health and even the life of the speaker—was not witnessed in later days. But when it was of frequent occurrence, and our friend was kindly reproached for being so nearly 'beside himself,' his answer, modest enough, was generally much in the style of my text to-day. If he was beside himself, it was to God; if sober, it was for the good of souls. I fill up the sentence, as an act of justice; for it would be a great mistake to think that our departed

preacher was only an enthusiast, carried away by strong impulse. Far from it. In the judgment of many he was one of the most cool, clear-headed, shrewd, and unimpassioned ministers who ever composed a sermon. His most carefully prepared discourses still remain in manuscript to attest this. It struck me on the only occasions I heard him—to my regret all of them in his later days—that in his own way he had prepared for and calculated upon the legitimate effect of every phase of thought and every turn of sentence. In fact, he was an artist, and not the less such because he was under the influence of the Spirit; he was under the influence of the Spirit, and not the less so because he was an artist.

But this leads to another—the other—meaning of the term 'constrain.' It has been more than once observed that Dr. Jobson was a many-sided man; a man of many accomplishments, of very diversified gifts and endowments and tastes. But it is also generally allowed that he blended, or rather the grace of God in him blended, all into a remarkable and a beautiful unity. There was a time in his life when the restraint that compressed and unified his pursuits made him perforce almost only a preacher: all his reading, all his painting, all his fruits of travel, all his observation of human nature, in which he was a master, all the fire of his imagination, and all the play of his humour, which also was one of his specific endowments,—were brought into the service of the

sermon. But after he had brought them into the service, they were sanctified by the unction of the Holy One. 'Although this often involved labour on his part, he grudged no labour that might be necessary to the welfare of the cause of Christ, and he often took from the night what the duties of the day did not allow him to give to study and devotion and retired pursuits necessary to the efficiency of the Christian ministry.' His ministry was eminently efficient, and, when he was in the full work, was abundantly blessed in the conversion of souls. What was the type of his ministry, and how true it was to St. Paul's example, the address delivered at his funeral shows, with great fidelity. And to that I must refer you.

I have dwelt on the character of the preacher at rather undue length; yet not disproportionate, if we are viewing our departed friend in the sum of his life. He would say now perhaps, if we could hear him, that that was his real work, the sum of his vocation. And he would be most solicitous that his surviving brethren, especially the young men who are forming a new generation, should keep up the tradition of the Methodist preaching in one great essential: its absolute confidence as the mediating embassage between the Saviour and the sinner. Whatever else there was in Dr. Jobson's preaching, either to be imitated or to be avoided, no one can do wrong in copying him, and men like him, in the directness, earnestness, and deep

reality of their transaction between Christ and the soul. This is not the peculiarity of Methodist preaching. It belongs to all that is worthy to be called the preaching of Christ. And, while on this point, I must refer to the reverence and dignity of his deportment of whom we speak. I never saw in him, no one ever saw, any token of undue familiarity with Divine things, or any disposition to lower them to men's questionable tastes. He seemed to hit the precise mean between a professional and official outward homage and a professional and official outward indifference. Everything connected with the service of God and the ministry of souls, down to its least details, had from him the respect and the reverence of a manly and devout soul.

But though his highest vocation was that of a preacher, and the love of Christ held him fast to that function, making that therefore the substance of his character, it would be wrong to omit reference to all those other good things in him which were thus brought into captivity.

Like many others of his brethren, Dr. Jobson offered to the Methodist Society, as a gift second only to preaching in importance, a remarkable faculty of administration, and a very sound judgment in counsel. He was therefore much trusted by his brethren, both ministers and laymen, both publicly and privately. I have had myself evidence of the singular confidence Dr. Jobson inspired in others: for instance, in the late

John Fernley, and not in him alone. The tributes which his departure has evoked from the committees of the institution, of chapel affairs, and of the Missionary Society, and the book-room especially, are in perfect accord as to this—all make emphatic their obligations to his sagacity, fidelity, and patient care. The time has hardly come—at any rate, this is not the time—for a full estimate of the value of his labours in the service of Methodist literature. Certainly the book-room, and almost everything pertaining to it, bears the impress of his hand, I may say of his genius. The difficulties he encountered—especially in popularising and widening the range of our literature, in defending our interest in the hymn-book, and more lately in other respects not now to be alluded to—were heroically encountered. He may be said to have triumphed, but at a great expense to himself. His nervous system received a secret shock; sleeplessness, and other ills supervened; and the final penalty was paid. But no man in such a work as ours dies prematurely on the verge of three score years and ten. Methodism has reason to be thankful that he did not earlier pay the penalty.

And also for other subordinate reasons, Dr. Jobson's literary contributions deserve very grateful mention. Not to speak of his work on ecclesiastical architecture, which is generally thought to have helped considerably to raise and direct the Connexional taste, and his occasional works of biography and travel, his charges

and his volume on 'Saving Truths' are a real and substantial addition to our literature. The latter, in particular, has to my knowledge, and some here can confirm what I say, been rendered a blessing to very many souls. I know few books I would rather give to thoughtful inquirers. He was too busy to write much himself; but he was thoughtful and kind, yet withal very faithful, in encouraging the efforts of others. He has, I suppose, been the instrument, direct or indirect, of suppressing many books which the world did not want; also, however, of bringing into existence some which the world did want. Publishers have great power and great responsibility, even when they are hemmed about by a vigilant committee. This publisher has been a wise and faithful one; he leaned by turns to the individual interest and to that of the body; but I think his final leaning was always to the Connexion which put him in trust. It may be added that he had much to do with the institution of the Fernley Lecture, which has been, and will yet be, a great gain to the community. He suggested the annual presidential volume with which the public are becoming so pleasantly familiar. But the public itself, especially that of the preachers, will better fill up the sketch at this point than I can.

Methodism was indebted to Dr. Jobson for service done through the catholic hospitality with which he represented his own to other religious communities. His house was a meeting-place for all whose hearts

were in a true sense one in Christ. Our friend was never happier than when he was the host at a table round which were bishops and clergy and leading Nonconformist ministers and godly statesmen and representative men of all shades: that is, of all shades in which the Christian colour gave the tone. Now these gatherings, which were very frequent, and, I may say, part of his financial household economy, were arranged as part of this good man's duty to Christ: otherwise I should not here allude to them. From the very beginning of his life Dr. Jobson was taught to acknowledge the power of Christianity in men from many of whose beliefs he dissented. Herein he was a genuine son of John Wesley, though it was apparently from his mother he inherited this beautiful largeness of charity. Such a temper of mind was invaluable to him through life; it saved him from the snare of bigotry; it taught him to see the tranquil and profound beauty of the Quaker's mysticism, and its connection with that of Thomas à Kempis at the other pole. In virtue of it he was a noble composite of Arminian and Calvinist, as the Methodist Conference seems to have been now and again. I personally know that the two joined in his interpretation of our afternoon's text: the Arminian rejoiced that 'One died for all,' God in Him 'reconciling the world;' while the Calvinist would rejoice in the deep pathos of 'they which live,' and their union and almost identity with Christ dead and risen again. This catho-

licity was a great comfort to him in his travels; almost like a personal interpreter and friend. It showed him, east, west, north, south, the soul of goodness in things evil, and made symbols and ceremonies which he witnessed with repulsion the channel of many a blessing to his soul. I have a picture painted by him on the walls of Jerusalem, which is beautiful in itself, and beautiful as exhibiting the catholicity of his hand. But to return. Our friend was a large-hearted, hospitable, catholic-minded host. Many an Eirenicon has been sketched at his table; to be admired as an ideal, to be abandoned and sighed over as hopeless. Dr. Jobson used to delight in reminiscences of friendly encounters over certain ecclesiastical and doctrinal and experimental points which very pleasantly illustrated the usefulness of these gatherings. All this is not without its importance; but we must pass on.

Because the end is at hand. For a few years it has been manifest that Dr. Jobson's public career was drawing to its close. Preliminary tokens were given which others perceived earlier than he did. His heart was in his work when his strength was not equal to it. Too many times has he risen after a perfectly sleepless night, and gone to his work—sometimes to his pulpit—with a courageous and loyal heart. Those who loved him most were most anxious that he should take the perfect rest that he had earned; but it was very obvious that, though his reason assented, his will was a traitor. Yet nothing was more certain than that he

clung to duty from the purest possible motive. The pathetic affliction which brought him gradually to his end was sanctified to his good. The tenderness and affection of his nature, his perfected meetness for heaven, genuine kindness of heart and perfect love to his brethren, were beautifully illustrated from stage to stage of his decline. And there is the best possible evidence that to the very last the honour of the Master, and the prosperity of the Church, and the well-being of his brethren, were more to him than any interest of his own. By degrees he was driven to give up thinking and talking about the public good. But the name of Jesus was a sure way to his failing heart down to the end. And that end was perfect peace.

It is easy enough to write this; and such expressions of assurance in death are happily very familiar to us. But let us solemnly lay to heart how much this means: how wonderful a triumph of grace it implies, and how inexpressible a privilege. Our departed friend and brother did not, be sure of it, after a self-seeking life of official Christianity, turn, when driven into retirement and forced from life, to throw himself upon the mercy of God. I do not say that he would have been rejected if that had been the case. But it was not the case. If one thing was more remarkable than another in his final testimonies, if there was one sentiment more than another that he laboured to express, it was his feeling of utter worthlessness apart from his Saviour. But this feeling was

not created by the prospect of death; it was only made more intense. As we have heard, 'He trusted in that Saviour whose sufficiency he had proved all his life through:' almost the identical words which he pencilled on a note to myself less than three weeks before the end. Let us all lay the lesson to heart. He who is gone had for long years been living under the influence—more or less powerful—of that dread truth which throws its solemn shadow of glorious light over our text: 'We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every man may receive the things done in the body.' His habits of daily devotion, and his most profound humility, and constant dependence on his Saviour, as the one sacrifice for his sins and the only life of his soul, were well known to those who knew him best. It was on the first Sunday of the year that he ceased to be able to speak what was in his heart. On that day he was reminded of the covenant service of his own people; and among his last words were such as these, 'I also give myself body and soul to be His for ever.' This was the last formal surrender. But he had long been endeavouring to live as one whose conversation was in heaven. Let us learn afresh this evening the old lesson; and see to it that the powers of the world to come, and the powers of that day which lies at its threshold, become the moving forces of our present life.

Once more, my Methodist brethren, we are called

to comfort each other in bereavement. Each successive winter for some years past has taken from us the fellowship of some gifted, trusted, and honoured servants of Christ. What a succession of such services as this have been held in old City Road during the past ten years! But there is very little in these bereavements to mourn over; at any rate, there is very little reason, no reason, for unmingled sorrow. We do mourn naturally. It is a real and genuine touch of deep regret that moves our heart on such an occasion as this, when the last name that stirs our sorrow suggests other names one after another of those whom we have lately lost. We also sympathise most cordially with the widows and families of our honoured brethren; especially this day with our last new widow, whose love and devotion to him who is gone has been a service to the whole Methodist community, and is now gratefully acknowledged by their sympathy. But we have much hope mingled with our sorrow. We believe that He who takes away such men from us will not fail to raise up successors who shall inherit their fidelity, and have, some of them, a double portion of their spirit. And we know that the Church—I can hardly say the Methodism—that thus buries her dead shall never die herself, but live on in Him, the One who died for us and rose again, and that each of us shall with Him live again to die no more. To Whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Sermons.

I.

ELIJAH ON CARMEL.

'And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.'—1 KINGS xviii. 42, 45.

ONE of the favourite and oft-repeated dogmas of sceptical infidelity is, that prayer is powerless, and has no prevalence with the Divine Being to call forth His interposition on the part of mankind. And in support of this bold and out-spoken assumption, the uniformity of nature, and the uninterrupted processes of her laws, are pleaded and dwelt upon with exultant boastful triumph and satisfaction. Look, it is said, at the regularity and order of all things—how the years revolve—how summer and winter, springtime and autumn succeed each other in their appointed seasons—how heat and vapour produce storms and showers; and how cause and effect in their operations are everywhere evident, both in the material world, and in the conditions and circumstances of mankind. Where, then, it is asked, is there Divine interposition in answer to prayer? This taunt of modern scepticism is what was foreseen and foretold by the apostle St. Peter, both in its principle and cause, when he said, 'There shall come in the last days scoffers . . .' (2 Peter iii. 3, 4); so that the unbelieving taunt is not surprising. It is, in fact, as the apostle intimates, the natural expression of depraved human nature, which

desires not the presence and interference of God in the world, where scoffers walk after their own lusts.

This assumption against prayer, however, is as false as it is profane. It rests on a baseless and short-sighted conclusion, drawn from secondary and wholly dependent causes, and not upon the great first and independent cause of all things. It rests upon nature, and upon what are called the laws of nature, and not upon the God of nature—without considering that He who controls and orders all things can, without violent interruption and interference with the working of His instruments, so associate and govern them as that they shall, with apparent cause and effect before men, produce certain results and consequences, and that in answer to prayer. The Scriptures of truth contradict this assumption, and most positively affirm and inculcate the power of prayer. They plainly teach that so far from its being an interference with God's ordained laws to bless man in answer to supplication, it is His fixed and established principle to do so—'For this He will be inquired of to do it for them.' They exhibit to us examples and support for this positive teaching in historic cases, where cities are spared, judgments averted, and benefits received in answer to intercessory prayer. And they enjoin upon us supplication for one another, for the Church, and for all men.

In this passage of Scripture you have this truth presented to you in the example of Elijah, that grand reformer of Israel in the time of wicked Ahab and the idolatrous Jezebel, the king's wife. The authority for this use and application of the passage is undoubted. St. James. the wise and practical instructor of pro-

fessing Christians, emphatically sets it forth in this aspect, and in support of the positive affirmation that 'The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' And, with this warrant, I propose to improve and apply the passage this morning—seeking to induce earnest, persevering prayer on behalf of God's cause and work among us. The drought has been long continued—the people have fainted and thirsted through lack of Divine blessing—the enemies of our Lord have railed against us for our want and weariness. Let us see where is our strength and sure source of returning prosperity. I stay not, at present, with the scene on Mount Carmel, impressive, sublime and attractive as it is. You are familiar with its facts and circumstances, and I shall have to refer to it as I proceed in elucidation and support of the instructive lessons which it sets before us on the subject we have now to contemplate.

I. And the first general and practical lesson which we draw from the narrative before us is that, in order to acceptable approach to God for Divine blessings, there must be *the resolute separation of ourselves from all idolatrous and contaminating evils, and the entire surrender of our souls to His worship and service.* The drought of the land of Israel had been on account of sin—as Elijah declared to Ahab, when accused of being the troubler of the people, 'I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim.' The prophet challenged the public proof of this; and after the descent of fire from heaven upon the sacrifice, which consumed the bullocks, the wood, the stones and the dust, and licked

up the water that was in the trenches, the people fell upon their faces, and they said, 'The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God!' The prophets of Baal were taken and slain at the brook Kishon; and then Elijah, in confident anticipation of abundance of rain, went to the top of Carmel for prayer, and cast himself down upon the earth.

And thus must it be with us, if we are to expect Divine blessings upon our Israel. We must recognise the fact that it is sin which has brought drought upon us—that this is the cause of our anxiety and trouble—that we have forsaken the commandment of the Lord, and followed after evil and evil-doers—and we must resolutely, and at any sacrifice, separate ourselves from evil, and from evil-doers. It is a fixed principle in the Divine government not to hear the prayer of the wicked, who intend to continue in sin. The prayer of the wicked is declared to be an abomination to the Lord. Special ordinances and services, however formally and solemnly performed, if not accompanied with reformation and righteousness, are offensive to the Divine Being, as He Himself declares: 'To what purpose,' He asks, 'is the multitude of your sacrifices.' (Isaiah i. 11—20.) The most voluntary and abject acts of humiliation, without amendment of life, and righteous dealing will be rejected by God, as He shews us in Isaiah lviii., where fasting and bowing down the head as a bulrush are said to be unavailing, without just and honourable conduct towards the injured and the oppressed. This truth was recognised by the Psalmist who said, 'If I regard iniquity my Lord will not hear me;' and who in remembrance of this truth prayed that God would search him and

know his heart—try him and know his thoughts, to see if there were any wicked way in him, and lead him in the way everlasting. He was careful to wash his hands in innocency in order to compass God's altar with acceptance. The same principle is set forth in the New Testament by Christ, the great teacher. If we bring our gift to the altar, and there remember that our brother hath ought against us, we are first to go and be reconciled to our brother, and then to come and offer our gift. Experience confirms this teaching. We have no access to God in seeking blessings for ourselves, no communion with Him while we cleave to evil of any kind. We must first clear ourselves of sin, and sinful practices, before we can draw near with assurance. And it is so in intercessory prayer for others and for the Church. It is vain for us to be dolefully lamenting the low and depressed condition of the cause of God, and expressing our desires and prayers for its revival and prosperity, if we ourselves are cleaving to iniquity. If we are worldly, and covetous, and proud, and neglectful of Christian duties, such conduct is as unreasonable and reprehensible as if one who has secretly injured another were to be publicly mourning over the injury, and lamenting that it had been inflicted; for it is by such worldly, proud and listless Christians that the Church is injured and pressed down. If there be iniquity tolerated in the house—if worldly licences, and amusements, and fashions are allowed in the family—if censorious language is therein employed upon professors of religion—if unrighteous, tricksy, low-cunning dealing is employed in business—if unfair and ungenerous treatment is

practised to servants and dependents—or if unfaithful service is rendered to masters and employers—then prayers for the revival and prosperity of Zion are insincere and unavailing. They may be solemnly and devoutly offered in form, but they do not reach the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth. The Lord God must be acknowledged in all His supreme majesty and requirements. Idolatry of the world—of its pomps and vanities—of its glitter and show, and of its assumed respectability—must be abandoned; its priests—they that minister to it—must be sacrificed, before Carmel is ascended, and before there is the sound of abundance of rain to be spoken of. It was so with Israel of old, and it is so with Israel still.

II. This narrative further teaches us on this subject that to be accepted and heard in intercessory prayer, there must be *profound reverence and pressing importunity*. 'Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.' By this significant act and posture, he acknowledged the supreme majesty of God as the Lord of heaven and earth. He placed himself as low down in creation as possible—doubling and abasing himself to the very earth—and there, with his absorbed mind bent on one object, he sought Divine interposition on behalf of his people. And so must we, to be accepted and heard, bow down our souls with reverence and godly fear, and we must be earnest and urgent in our request. Irreverent prayers are not heard. They do not affect our own minds, and they are not likely to affect the mind of God. Listless, heartless petitions are not accepted. They fall powerless to the ground. Only prayers of souls

fully bent in devotion reach the skies. In how many parts of Scripture have we this truth presented to us! In the examples and language of Old Testament saints: of Abraham, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Daniel; in the teaching of Christ on the importunate widow; in the declarations and injunctions of the apostles: the *fervent* effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And here, by this example of Elijah, who cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees and prayed. Brethren, we must be urgent in our intercessory prayers, if we expect to be heard and answered. It is not a few unfelt phrases and sentences uttered with pious formality that will succeed. We must besiege the throne of grace with the full purpose and energy of the soul, remembering that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and that the violent take it by force. There must not only be prayer but supplication. We must entreat the Lord. We must *call* upon Him. We must cry unto Him. We must *pour out* our souls before Him. This importunate pleading—this prayerful violence—may not always be loudly and violently expressed. It may so intensify the inward feeling, and so press and weigh down the spirit, that it shall not be able to express itself in connected and continuous words—the spirit may make intercession within us with groanings that cannot be uttered. But the intent earnestness of the soul shall be regarded by God, and its desires, too strong for utterance, shall be registered and fulfilled. Jacob wept and made supplication before his God. 'Moses besought the Lord his God.' David cried unto the Lord, and speaks of his tears being put into a bottle for remembrance.

Christ Himself offered up strong cries and tears. And we have read and heard of eminent servants of God in more recent times whose fervour in prayer was great, beyond ordinary expression. Mary, Queen of Scots, declared that she was more afraid of John Knox's prayers than of all the armies of Europe. Luther, and Hooper, and Latimer, and Wesley, and Whitfield, and Fletcher were men of prayer—of fervent prayer. Bramwell, and Stoner, and Smith were men of importunate prayer. Dr. Coke, the founder of your missions, under God, used, in yonder City Road house, to pass whole nights in prayer—prostrate, like Elijah, upon the floor—and when found dead in his cabin on his way to India, it was evident that he had died upon his knees, and then fallen over upon the floor. Your fathers and mothers in Methodism were men and women of earnest, supplicatory prayer. What means that section in our hymn-book for 'Believers Interceding'? It contains hymns for intercessory weekly meetings, held weekly by the members of the Church. Brethren, this is what we want—devout earnestness, and pressing importunity in our prayers.

III. And then another practical lesson taught us on this subject by this narrative is, that though immediate circumstances may not be promising, yet we must *persevere in believing supplications*, not doubting that the blessings we seek shall be ultimately given to us. 'Elijah cast himself down upon the earth . . . seven times.' It was not a petition once urgently offered that sufficed; but he sent his servant again and again, still continuing at prayer, and that though the servant returned and said, 'There

is nothing'—and he sent him seven times. This was the prayer that fainted not, and that persevered amidst all difficulties and discouragements, believing in God that He would hear and answer. Faith struggles with difficulties. It waxes firmer with opposition and discouragements. It pleads and pursues its object, until from fifty righteous it reaches to ten, as in the case of Abraham. It wrestles on through the night until the breaking of the day, under weakness and dislocation of limbs, and when importuned to cease and let the Almighty go, it says, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' It perseveres in the face of danger and death, and kneels and prays three times a day before God, as it did aforetime. It kneels at the feet of Jesus, and after neglectful silence and repulse out of the most discouraging answer, extracts a reason for help, saying, 'Yea, Lord! but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the masters' table.' It beseeches the Lord thrice concerning the thorn in the flesh. It discolours the very wall by its praying breath, as in Fletcher's study at Madeley. It continues instant in prayer. It cries unto God day and night, until He arise and avenge his own elect, by giving them what they ask.

Brethren! this, too, is what we want for availing, effectual prayer—*Perseverance*—believing, unwearied perseverance. It is not one prayer that will serve. We must pray, and pray again. And though, when we look for signs and encouragements, nothing should appear in the horizon, yet we must pray on. We must go, and go again; and though, when we look for the quickening of the Church and the awakening of sinners, it should be said, 'There is nothing':

still we must pray and look again, not doubting that the answer will sooner or later appear. We must bow ourselves seven times to the earth, not fainting, nor ceasing in our prayers; but believing that though the blessing tarry it will come; and though now not even a speck appear in the sky to encourage us, yet we must continue to pray and look for the coming shower. Here, undoubtedly, is often found the failure of our prayers—that they are not constant and persevering. They are fitful and uncertain. We pray, and because we do not immediately receive an answer, we cease to pray, thinking the blessing will not come. We do not *wait* upon the Lord as required to do. And this ceasing to pray proves our want of earnestness. If we were fully in earnest—if our whole soul was in our prayers, we should not cease to pray so soon. We should pray and pray again. We should continue instant in prayer. We should pray always, with all prayer and supplication. We should pray without ceasing. The Almighty tries us by deferring the answer. As when Jesus joined himself to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, and made their hearts burn within them, He made, says St. Luke, as though He would have gone further, not intending to leave them; for He had to make Himself known to them in the breaking of bread; but He thus acted to quicken their desire, and to draw forth more earnestly the request from them—'Abide with us!' And so God waits to see if his people are earnestly and perseveringly intent upon obtaining His blessing. Delays are not denials. The Lord whom ye seek will suddenly come to His temple. The night of weeping and wrestling may be long and trying, but at the

breaking of the day shall the persevering Jacob be crowned a prince, having power with God and prevailing. Suppose that Elijah had ceased from prayer on the servant returning the sixth time and saying, 'There is nothing,' then all former service, and the blessing sought would have been lost. So with us: we must follow up our prayers, and look after the answer.

IV. Another lesson taught us by this narrative is, that the *smallest sign of Divine blessing should encourage us in prayer,* and lead us confidently to expect the largest outpourings of grace and salvation. It was so with Elijah, who when he heard that there arose a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand, sent immediately to Ahab to prepare his chariot and to get down, that the rain should not stop him. The smallest token of God's presence and power is not to be despised or undervalued. It is proof that He is near to us: that He is in the way of answering. The little cloud rising out of the sea, like a man's hand, is the first appearance of His interposition. It shall enlarge and spread, and the heaven shall become black with clouds and wind, and there shall be a great rain. Small beginnings often produce large and wonderful effects, and they spread themselves rapidly and extensively around. It is so in the spread of the Gospel, and in the revival of God's work in the Church. A minister preaches, and the people help him together with their prayers: one hearer gets impressed and converted; perhaps after a long and trying suspense which tries the faith and perseverance of all. Then another gets impressed and converted. Then another. Then the cloud gathers; spreads over the heaven;

there are showers of blessing; the Spirit is poured out from on high; the heavens rain down righteousness; the earth opens and drinks in her increase, and fruits of grace and salvation spring up everywhere! It is so with the revival of the Church. Faithful ones, impressed with the low and worldly state of the cause of God, go up to the top of Carmel, and cast themselves down to the earth in prayer. The answer is delayed, but they pray on, and they still look for the sign of Divine blessing. At length, after long trial of faith, a little cloud arises. One believer is quickened and sanctified, and begins to speak of the work of the Lord; then another, then another, then another, until the whole Church is moved, and there is a great rain of spiritual blessings upon the whole body of Israel. Brethren! despise not the day of small and feeble things. Say not when a sinner is converted, 'It is only one.' The conversion of that one soul, even if the soul of a little child, is the sure sign of God's presence and power; and He who gives the little cloud can cover the whole heaven with cloud and wind, and send an abundance of rain. Say not when one believer is blessed and sanctified, that that is little compared with the whole Church. The revival of the work of God must have a beginning. Take that little cloud as the pledge and harbinger of wide-spread and abundant blessing. Give God the glory of His grace. Despise not the day of His visitation; but believe that He who has given this token of his appearance, will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. And, observe that this cloud arose in a natural manner, though it was given in answer to prayer.

The prophet bid his servant look towards the sea, whence the vapour was naturally to arise, and the rain to come from. God works by natural and ordinary means though it be by power that produces miraculous effects—a fact which is the stumbling-block of sceptics, such as we referred to at the beginning. This case of great rain upon the land of Israel was a direct answer to prayer, but it was not without cloud, nor without the little cloud rising out of the sea, and spreading gradually abroad. Look not for blessings out of the ordinary way, and apart from the appointed means of grace. God works by means, and does not supersede them, even in His most signal answers to prayer. And in most instances he comes silently at the beginning, and gradually, until the cloud of His blessing covers the heaven, and there is a great rain. Some persons do not look towards the sea for the rising cloud, but towards the parched and barren land. They look not to the ordinary and divinely-appointed means of grace, but to something extraordinary and different to what has been in use. This is looking to means and instruments beyond what we are warranted in doing. We must look to God. We must expect to see His goings in the sanctuary. We must look for conversions under the word, and for sanctification through the truth.

My brethren! I commend this subject to your devout and earnest attention. It is the subject which the Church, both in its ministers and people, ought to consider in the present day. With all our multiplied means and agencies; with all our increase of chapels and schools; and with all our enlargement of contributions and funds, the land of our Israel is parched

and dry, and our inquiry is: 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah'? We need the rain of Divine blessing upon us, and nothing else can refresh and satisfy us. This is only to be obtained in answer to prayer. No other power can move the Almighty; but to this power He graciously yields, even to the bestowment of abundant blessing. It is not the offerings of gold and silver without prayer that are acceptable to Him. These are His by original right and proprietorship, as well as the cattle upon a thousand hills. In too many instances these are offered as a substitute for spiritual service; as if now, as in the days of Simon Magus, the Holy Ghost were to be purchased by money. Liberal contributions to the cause of God are required from them who are entrusted with pecuniary means. Where much is given, much is required. But Jehovah is not to be bribed by large and splendid offerings. It is not the erection of chapels and the spread of external agency that will secure a spiritual rain; though these are not to be neglected. It is not eloquence, and the displays of human genius. These may attract attention, and produce wonder and admiration; but they cannot fill the sanctuary and the Church with the presence and power of God. Indeed, if looked to, and relied upon, more than upon the truth and the Holy Spirit, they will bring hardness and barrenness most desolating. God will be supremely honoured and trusted in. He giveth not His glory to another. Prayer is man's practical acknowledgement of this, and devout, earnest, persevering prayer, is what has been divinely appointed and enjoined upon us for the revival and increase of the work of the Lord in the earth.

This vital truth has of late years been signally placed before us in the history and experience of the Church. In connection with recent revivals, as well as in connection with the revivals of Pentecost and the Reformation, prayer, and continuing instant in prayer was in exercise. You cannot point to any extensive work of God, either in former or later times; whether in Alpine regions, among the persecuted Waldenses, or in Moorfields in the days of Whitfield; whether in Scotland in the days of Chalmers, or in the Friendly Islands under your own missionaries, but prayer was prominent and prevailing. And so in more recent visitations, when large numbers were saved and added to the Lord in America and in Ireland. Mid-day prayer meetings, where merchants and tradesmen, joined with devout women, waited upon God; put up their petitions in faith, and persevering supplications, and the effects were signal and surprising. Petitions were offered in agreement for husbands, and wives, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and answers came. In some instances relatives distant—yea, sons apart in different ships on the wide ocean, and amidst ungodly companions—were converted, and sent from different ports the grateful news of what God had done for them. Notorious reprobate sinners, herding together in a locality named from the character of its occupants 'Hell corner,' in answer to prayer were converted and saved; and their change being so evident, the name of the city suburb where they lived was changed by public requirement, for the 'Corner of Paradise.' And how were all these wonders wrought? Were they in connection with brilliant gifts and splendid attainments?

With eloquent and elaborate speeches and preaching? Nay; you know not the names of men more prominent in the instrumentality employed. I have no doubt the preaching was good and powerful. I have no doubt that men were moved to true eloquence; and that in a critical view, there were touches of beauty and power that surpass all prepared and studied elaboration and finish. Peter was not less eloquent on the day of Pentecost; but it was prayer that God heard and honoured. Prayer not confined to ministers, but prayer by merchants and tradesmen; prayer by mechanics and day-labourers; prayer by holy women; prayer by all the Church. Let there be this. Let the Church betake itself, after separation from evil, to Carmel. Let it cast itself down to the earth with its face between the knees, in profound reverence and self-abasement. Let it pray on amidst unpromising circumstances, even when the report shall be given, 'There is nothing.' Then shall the cloud arise out of the sea, little as a human hand it may be at the beginning; but the cloud shall spread and extend on every side, until the heaven shall be black with cloud and wind, and then shall there be a great rain.

Sinner! shall this work of God begin here with you? The servants of the Lord are praying and looking for the sign of Divine blessing. Shall it be said of you, 'Behold he prayeth.' That is what is said in heaven, when a sinner repents. Begin to pray! Pray for repentance to Him who is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Pray for grace to forsake all evil, and resolve to do so.

Pray for faith, and try to exercise it; faith in the blood of Christ, which satisfies Divine justice, and cleanses from all sin. Pray believing God's word, where it is declared that, 'Whosoever calleth upon the Lord shall be saved.' The Lord help you. Amen.

II.

'WHERE IS THE LORD GOD OF ELIJAH?'

'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'—2 KINGS ii. 14.

IF ever there was a time when the anxious and energetic question of the text should be publicly asked before the Church of the living God, undoubtedly it is at the present day. With nearly all sections of that Church there is the complaint of decreased spiritual vigour and prosperity. If not as to external agencies and arrangements, yet as to Divine power, converting the soul, and separating the followers of Christ from an ungodly and time-serving world. Almost all religious communities are ready to acknowledge that 'the former days were better than these.' It is so with ourselves. And, though we would not be unmindful of the goodness of God to us, in manifestly bestowing His blessings upon us, yet we have reason to assemble ourselves together and inquire why it is that the saving power of the Lord is not more fully displayed amongst us; and why it is that men are not in large numbers drawn off from the servitude of Satan into the fold of the Heavenly Shepherd, as they were in the days of our fathers?

Is it because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is *preached less faithfully?* Are its truths garbled and minced by the men that proclaim them? Do they shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God? Do they

describe sin by milder names, or as less dangerous to the sinner? Out of courtesy to the world, has it been said that a little religion will save the soul of man; while the Scripture has been forgotten, that 'without holiness no man shall see the Lord?' Has repentance been set forth as less necessary, or as not requiring all sin to be forsaken? Has any other foundation been laid in Zion for acceptance with God than that of the atoning sacrifice of Christ? Has it ceased to be declared that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin? Has the Gospel—the good news—that there is a free, full and a present salvation for every sinner who will come to God through His Son; and that whosoever cometh unto Him He will in no wise cast out; been less openly published and made known? Nay, I believe it cannot be said that as ministers of the Word we have cloaked God's truth, or failed to declare it plainly. We may have preached it feebly and imperfectly, but not unfaithfully.

Are, then, the plain old *doctrines of the Bible* becoming, as some would have us believe, *unfit for the wants of the age?* Are they manifestly behind the times in which we live; fitted only for the childhood and youth of the human race, and not to its manhood of enlightenment and wisdom; and must something now be added to them to make them popular and attractive? Must science and philosophy now be mixed with the Gospel to strengthen and support it; and must the Christian minister sent forth to preach—to publish and proclaim as a herald—Christ's Gospel to every creature, forget or interline his commission; and forsaking the apostolic model of knowing nothing among men save Jesus Christ,

and Him crucified, shall they become discoursers on subjects of popular taste, that they may obtain a hearing among mankind? Is this the great want of the Church at the present time? Or is it, as some have even dared to insinuate, that the world, in its increased enlightenment, is now raised above the morality of the Bible, and that for better days we want a new and a better revelation? It is to be feared that the contrary is the case, and that so far from the world becoming less sinful, it is becoming more selfishly and elaborately wicked, so that it is increasingly sinking lower and lower beneath the morality of the Bible?

Shall it then be said that the *Divine Being has changed* in His power or willingness to bless and save mankind? Has His holy arm been shortened so that it cannot save? Has His holy ear become deaf so that it cannot or will not hear? Has His yearning love ceased towards the children of men? Have their multiplied rebellions through six thousand years exhausted His infinite mercy, so that He has withdrawn from them the saving health of His presence, and left them to fill up the measure of their iniquity, until the red harvest of His wrath shall come at the end of the world? Dare any one presume to say, or to think this, and thus most unwarrantably suppose that the reason of the Church's want of vigour and increase is attributable to the Almighty? No reverent and devout mind, instructed by the Holy Scriptures in the unchangeableness of the Divine character, will do this. O, no; our God is still the same in our days as He was in the days of our fathers, and as He was in ancient times. 'He is of one mind and changeth

not.' He is still able to save, willing to save, and present to save. His Holy Bible is also the same. It has not been mutilated nor corrupted. It is not worn out, and fallen behind the age, but is now as full, as fresh, and as powerful as ever it was to convince the understanding, soften the heart, and instrumentally to convert and save the soul. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is still the same. It is *His* Gospel we preach and not another. Salvation through Him is still the minister's theme; and now, as in the apostles' day, they say, before all opposition and amidst all false counsellors and advisers, '*We* preach Christ crucified.'

Where, then, is the great want of the Church in the present time? Some great want most assuredly there is; and yet the outward means and agencies are the same, and are in full and active use among us. God is the same—the Bible is the same—the Gospel is the same—and the Gospel is fully preached. Where then is the want we feel and lament? It is in *the power of prayer,* which shall bring the Divine blessing upon the means and agencies employed, so as to render them effectual in the accomplishment of spiritual objects, and in producing religious prosperity amongst us. This is our great want of these times; and all adjustments of outward rules and regulations for the external government of the Church,—all plans and purposes, however wisely conceived or actively pursued,—will all be as so much well arranged and highly polished machinery without the motive power to stir and work it. There is no created power in the universe to which God yields but the power of prayer. A minister of Christ's Gospel is not only to give

himself to the Word, but also to *prayer*. That Gospel, to be preached effectively, must be preached not only with the breath of prayer from the preacher, but also amidst the breathing supplications of God's children. It is then, when the breath of intercession and of believing supplication ascends from the souls of the faithful, that the Lord makes bare His holy arm, and adds to the Church daily such as shall be saved. My brethren, we have forgotten this too much. We have supposed that the preaching of the Gospel would accomplish its own end; and relying upon the order, the regularity, and the abundance of mere ordinances, we have not borne in our remembrance that God blesses the ordinances just as far as they are administered and attended by a praying Church. We have not remembered with constancy, in the good old Saxon language of early Methodism, that Jehovah is 'a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God'—in other words, that He is 'the Lord God of Elijah.'

This *prophet of the Lord* is set before us in the Scriptures as the strongest instance of the power of prayer. St. James, you will remember, selects him from all the Old Testament saints, as a most stimulative example of believing prayer. And in the historical books of the Bible, where his wondrous and mighty deeds are recorded, you will find that all he did is associated with prayer. He did not live at a time when religion was prosperous, and when the Church was daily increasing, but when nearly all Israel had openly abandoned the service of God, and when a wicked and idolatrous king had trodden it under foot. But even then the fervent, effectual prayers of this one righteous man availed much with God, and He

openly interfered to vindicate His cause, and to recover His people. How encouraging to the prayerful of God's people in all succeeding ages of time!

But the words of the text were spoken by Elijah's *successor*. It was not enough for Elisha that Elijah's mantle had fallen upon him from the ascending chariot, when he exclaimed in affection and sorrow, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!' He desired to know if Elijah's spirit had been abundantly given to him according to his last request; and so coming to the Jordan, which he had previously crossed with his master, and which had parted its flowing waters when Elijah smote it with his mantle, Elisha took that same mantle, and striking the river with it, he cried out, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' God answered the prayerful cry of His servant, proving that He was unchangeable; and thus we have in Elisha's, as well as in Elijah's case, encouragement to earnest and believing prayer.

I would, this morning—First, earnestly invite you to consider that great, distinctive relation in which God stands to His Church: He is a God hearing and answering prayer—He is 'the Lord God of Elijah'; and—Secondly, I would as earnestly entreat you so fully to regard the value of prayer, and your duty to offer it up for the revival and prosperity of the work of God, that you shall cry out in an agony of believing prayer, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'

I. Then, let me earnestly invite you to consider *that peculiar, that distinctive relation in which God stands to His Church.* He is a God hearing and answering prayer.

That it is in this relation the Divine Being is set

forth to us by the significant designation of the text, 'the Lord God of Elijah,' there can be no doubt; for as we have already remarked, it is as the great example of 'fervent, effectual prayer' that Elijah is presented to us in the Scriptures. Not only is he expressly named by the apostle in this character, but all the mighty acts which he wrought are associated with prayer. 'He prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.' He prayed for the restoration of the widow's son, and his spirit returned to him. He prayed for fire to come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice on Carmel, and the fire fell before Israel and the priests of Baal, and licked up the water that ran around in the trenches, and the very dust on the altar. He prayed that it might rain, and the heavens gave rain, and the land again became fruitful. And so, with all that he did, he was emphatically a man of prayer. In this character he was known by Elisha; for from the time when Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha when he was ploughing in his father's field, and had cheerfully forsaken his friends and his home to become the follower and servant of the prophet, Elisha had known Elijah intimately, and had witnessed his earnest and believing prayer to God both in private and in public. He had seen also the signal answers given to his master's prayers. When, therefore, Elisha took Elijah's mantle and smote the water exclaiming, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' it must have been with the spirit of prayer, inquiring whether Jehovah was the same to fulfil his request as He was to fulfil the request of his predecessor, whose ascent to heaven he had just witnessed. He had

asked, as his most desirable possession, that a double portion of Elijah's spirit might rest upon him. That spirit he knew to be pre-eminently the spirit of prayer. He had received Elijah's mantle cast down upon him from the ascending chariot as the significant token that he was Elijah's appointed successor; and now coming to the river, which his master had smitten with his mantle to divide, he did the same, that he might have proof that he possessed his master's spirit; and that He who had heard Elijah, and had so signally fulfilled Elijah's requests, would hear him, and fulfil his requests. The inquiry of the text was, therefore, literally one relating to God as hearing and answering prayer. It was as if the prophet had said, 'Is the Lord God as near to me to hear and to answer my prayers as he was to hear and to answer the prayers of my predecessor, whose spirit of prayer I have received? If so, let Him fulfil now my desire, as He did that of Elijah, and divide this river for me to pass over it'—'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'

And this is our great inquiry when we think of the mighty works which the Almighty did in the days of our fathers, and in the old time before them, and that in answer to prayer. We ask, is God with us to answer our prayers, as He answered theirs? Or has He departed further from us into the secret place of His pavilion, beyond the cry of His people, the time for signal and abundant answers to prayer having passed away? You know the correct answer to this inquiry, that, as the hearer of prayer, He is the same to-day as yesterday; that He is no respecter of persons; and that when reading or hearing of what God was to our fathers, and to the saints of old, we may con-

fidently say, 'This God is our God for ever and ever.' The relation of God to His people, as the hearer and answerer of prayer, is not abrogated or weakened. It is not one that time or change of dispensations can affect. Unto Him *all* flesh shall come; and upon His throne of grace He ever sits to hearken to the prayers of His people and to answer them; for 'He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry and will help them.'

Observe, however, that it is to *His people* that He bears the peculiar and distinctive relation of which we speak—as the hearer and the answerer of prayer. It was Elijah and Elisha and His servants whom He heard in days of old; and it is them that love and serve Him now whom He hears and answers. They are saints and not sinners who are thus heeded by Heaven: men who, like Elijah, separate themselves from the ungodly world, and follow not a multitude to do evil, and who, in retirement from the world, hold communion with God. It is true that Jehovah lends a compassionate ear to the returning sinner, and that as soon as he says, 'Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee'; but it is when the sinner *is returning* that his prayer is heard, and not when he is far removed from God by sin and wicked works. You remember the awful declaration: 'The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.' And it is so not only in those gross and provoking imprecations which some utter in the spirit of anger and fierce revenge, when they solemnly pray for their own destruction, and the destruction of others who have offended them; but also in licentious breathing after low and degrading pleasures, and in worldly desires

for wealth and greatness. Yea, even the prayers they profess to offer on their knees, and in God's house, are an abomination to Him; for if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me. It is the humble, the devout, the godly, that the Divine Being hears and answers. And the more especially He hears their prayers for His work and cause upon the earth, as we have at present more immediately to show. The wicked man cannot pray sincerely and earnestly for these. He is not concerned for himself, much less for others. He has not the spirit or the language of true prayer. He is ignorant of the very alphabet—the very first elements of prayer—how, then, can he pray? No more than a child who has never learned the alphabet can read a book of great learning. And as for the mourner—the returning sinner—he is only just beginning to learn the alphabet of prayer. He is not yet able to cry, 'Abba, Father.' He is at present, though an undoubted object of interest to God and to angels, but a stammerer in the language and dialect of prayer. And he stands yet afar off, concerned only for himself. He smites upon his breast and cries, 'God be merciful to *me* a sinner!' It is the believer who has received the spirit of adoption, and can cry lovingly and confidently, 'My Father,' that God hears and answers. It is to him that the Lord says, 'My child, receive thy desire.' He does not answer strangers: they have no acquaintance with Him, and make no application to Him. He does not answer rebels: they make no petition to Him, but resist Him. He answers His dutiful subjects—His praying and obedient children. It is therefore to His own people —to His Church—that He bears the distinctive relation

of which we speak when we say, 'He is a God hearing and answering prayer.'

And how *signally and abundantly* has He illustrated this great relation to His people in past ages! What proofs and examples of it we have recorded in the Scriptures! Proofs and examples under all dispensations, and under all circumstances. Proofs and examples in the deliverance of God's people from the power of their enemies—in their extrication from natural and physical difficulties—in displays of miraculous power on their behalf—in supplying to them all temporal and earthly food; and in solacing them with all spiritual grace and consolation. All these general statements you could readily find abundant evidence for in the records of the Bible. You know by testimony the most undoubted and decisive that the Lord God *does* hear and answer the prayers of His people. If it should be asked sceptically, or unbelievingly, '*How can prayer influence the mind of God,* seeing He seeth the end from the beginning, and has laid all His plans and made all His purposes in infinite wisdom?' we would reply, It is evidently a part of God's plan, and manifestly His purpose to give His blessings in answer to prayer. He gives life to man, and fruit to the earth, but through means; and if the means be withheld, the life and fruit will assuredly fail. Why then should not prayer be a regularly appointed means which, when employed in obedience, should be regarded and honoured by Him, yea, and that even to the interference with the general order of His material works? Is there anything irregular or disorderly in God, Who made the sun, making it to stand still? Or in His staying the

waters of the river, or the sea, which He had first caused to flow? Is the one more difficult than the other? Is God bound by the laws of necessity, so that He can never interfere with His own works? Is this the philosophy that argues against the power of prayer? If so, it is manifestly vain and foolish. And so with the descent of spiritual blessings. Is it inconsistent or unreasonable for Him to establish the connection between prayer and their bestowment? Is it not reasonable that His people should feel their need of blessings which He has to bestow upon them? Is it not reasonable that they who are dependent on Him should ask for them? And if so, is it unreasonable that He should withhold them if they do not pray? Reason is manifest in the appointed connection between prayer and the bestowment of Divine blessings. But we remember that the Holy Scriptures supply no systematic defence of prayer as the appointed means of good. They simply present the *facts* of answers to prayer, and leave these facts to produce their certain effect upon the mind. These facts, as we have said, are numerous and various, and relate both to temporal and spiritual benefits, so that they cannot be mistaken or doubted.

What are the names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Hannah, and Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Daniel, and Peter, and Paul, but names inseparably associated with signal instances of answers to prayer—to say nothing of the great and prevalent man named in my text. Yea it would seem that so much importance does God attach to this exercise, that His book has been written as a record and a comment almost

exclusively upon it. For what is the Bible but a revelation of the Divine Being as the hearer and the answerer of prayer? What is the first acceptable scene presented to us outside the gate of Paradise? Abel bowed before His altar? What is the most honourable memorial of the antediluvian age? 'Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord.' What are the most striking representations of the patriarchal dispensation? They are such as portray before us the efficacy and the power of prayer. What are they? Abraham at prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah; and the tempest of fire suspended in the air until his prayer is ended; for not until Abraham ceased to pray did a flake of the consuming element descend. Jacob at prayer—wrestling with God at night by the brook Jabbok; and when dragged to and fro by his mysterious antagonist, who said, 'Let me go for the day breaketh,' replying, though faint and disjointed, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me.' And we see him blessed and crowned a prince upon the field. What have you in the records of the prophets and the kings? You have Moses at prayer, and God exclaiming, as if held back and restrained by his prayer, 'Let me alone that I may destroy them!' You have Elijah at prayer, and the last fleece of cloud departing from the sky of Palestine for three years and six months. Again he prays, a cloud arises like a man's hand, enlarges, spreads over the whole land, and there is abundance of rain. Again he prays, and the departing soul of the widow's son is called back from the world of spirits, and the dead child lives again. You have Solomon at prayer—for himself, seeking wisdom for his royal office, and riches

and honour added in the answer to his request. You have him praying at the dedication of the temple before all the people, and the Divine cloud descending visibly and filling the house of the Lord until the priests could not stand to minister at the altar. You have Hezekiah at prayer, and the Lord hearkening unto him, and healing the people. He prays again, and fifteen years are added to his life, and the day is lengthened, so that by the shadow on the dial of Ahaz he may be assured that he is heard. You have Daniel at prayer; and the secret of the Lord is made known to him in a night vision concerning the dream of the king. He prays three times a day in his chamber, kneeling upon his knees. You have Jonah at prayer in the fish's belly. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others at prayer. What have you in the New Testament? You have the apostles and the disciples continuing instant in prayer, and the Holy Spirit descending on the day of Pentecost, filling the place where they were assembled, and converting men by thousands in a day. You have the new converts at Jerusalem continuing steadfastly in prayer. You have Peter and John prayed for in the house of Mark's mother, and liberated while they were praying. You have Peter at prayer on the house top. Cornelius at prayer. Paul and Silas at prayer, and the earthquake shaking the prison to its very foundations. Yea, you have a higher example still. You have Christ at prayer. Praying in the temple; praying in the desert place; praying in the graveyard at Bethany; praying in the garden of Gethsemane; praying on the cross. And in the Apocalypse which closes the book of Revelation, where the scene

of heaven is beheld through the open door, what is the representation of Christ's appearance there for His people? He has in His hand a golden censer. What bears He in that censer? The prayers of the saints. I repeat it, the Bible is an inspired record and revelation on the subject of prayer; and in its abundant and varied contents attests the truth of that peculiar and distinctive relation which God bears to His people as the hearer and answerer of prayer. He is in this sense, the Lord and God of His praying servants. He is 'the Lord God of Elijah.'

II. And now, brethren, let me affectionately and earnestly entreat you *so fully to regard the importance and power of prayer that you shall seek by it the desired revival and prosperity of the work of God, exclaiming like Elisha in an agony of believing prayer,* 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' Where is the God who answered so signally the prayers of His servants in times that are past?

The importance and power of prayer you have seen from the brief recital we have hastily made of what God did for His saints of old, and for the Christian Church, in answer to prayer. But have we not still nearer and more tangible proofs of these in *our own personal experience?* What was the first sign of the Spirit's work upon our hearts, but that which heaven declared of the subdued Saul of Tarsus, when it was said, 'Behold he prayeth'! How obtained we deliverance from sin, from misery, and danger? By perseverance in prayer. What has instrumentally preserved us in the Divine favour, and enabled us to maintain a holy life to this day? Continuance in prayer. When have been bestowed upon us rich and

purifying baptisms of the Holy Ghost? When we have earnestly and believingly sought them by prayer. From first to last—from the first spiritual breathing of one born of God to the commending of his spirit, like Stephen, to the hands of Christ—the Christian's life is connected with prayer. And if at any time he ceases to pray, at that time he ceases to live. And so with the *Church and its state and progress* in the world. Its strength and life have from the beginning been connected with prayer. If the hands of Aaron, the priest of intercession, hang down, Amalek prevails; but if held up in prayer, then Israel prevails. If apostate and rebellious Israel is not to be recovered and restored, the Almighty says to Jeremiah, 'Pray not for this people for their good;' but if blessings are to be multiplied upon them, He will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. The foundations of the Christian Church were laid in prayers and supplications. The apostolic Churches rose and were edified as the members were found helping together by prayer. And so since the spiritual state of every Church that has existed might have been assuredly tested by its spirit and exercises in prayer. If these were low and feeble, the Church was low and feeble. On the other hand, every revival has been in the first instance a revival of the spirit of prayer; and that revival continued only as long as the spirit of prayer continued. If it departed, no matter how large or attractive, or outwardly active and zealous the Church might be, there was no real spiritual prosperity. There has been no exception to this—no not in a single instance. The revivals in the days of Whitfield and Wesley, of Bramwell, and

Stoner, and Smith, of Chalmers, of Kilsyth—the abundant outpourings of the Spirit in the South Sea islands, and any other signal instances of prosperity that may be named, were all associated with earnest and believing prayers. And for the most part with *united and social prayers;* for there is a special importance attached to these in the Scriptures that must not be overlooked. There is fellowship in prayers, as in other exercises which God requires. There is an agreeing to ask as touching the kingdom of Christ, which He will honour. There is the gathering together of two or three in His name which secures the Saviour's presence in the midst of them. And we can easily understand how there is increased and prevailing power in associated prayer. It is not, then, separated, feeble cries, ascending singly; but it is individual cries united into one loud entreaty, besieging with the accumulated energy of many the throne of heaven. It is not the wavering, spiral wreath ascending feebly and separately from each altar, but it is the smoke from each sacrifice meeting and ascending together in one cloud of sweet-smelling savour before the Lord. It is heart prompting heart, and voice prompting voice, until prayer becomes as the sound of many waters, and of mighty thunderings. It is the prayer of a multitude mutually stimulated by their associated exercises. It is 'striving together' in prayer, as the apostle describes it; and 'labouring fervently for others.'

And shall we not be reminded that prayers to be effectual and availing must be *fervent and believing.* They must not be cold and listless, but ardent and entreating. They are to be the fervid expression of

souls that thirst for God, even as the hart panteth after the water-brook. Our heart and flesh are to cry out after the living God. The poor are to use entreaties. There is to be the full desire and the strong request—'Open thy mouth, and I will fill it.'

Yea, command ye Me, says the Lord. The watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem are not to hold their peace day or night; they are to give God *no rest*, and Israel are to *try* God and to *prove* Him. We are to ask, to seek, to *knock*. The kingdom of God suffereth *violence*, and the violent take it by force. Jacob *wrestled* in prayer; he strove mightily; and he had power over the angel and prevailed; 'he *wept* and made supplication unto him.' The unjust judge yieldeth to importunity, much more God to His elect, who cry unto Him day and night. The Syrophœnician woman who will take no denial obtains her daughter's cure. Christ was in agony when he prayed. He offered up strong cries and tears. Paul *besought* the Lord thrice. And Elias, the great example before us, was a man of might and perseverance in prayer. His character throughout is that of firm, unflinching, manly determination. He was no wavering time-server. He thought himself alone, and yet he went not with the multitude to do evil. He fearlessly faced a murderous king, and openly challenged the priests of Baal. He stood unmoved before the successive fifties of the soldiers of Ahaziah, and smote them down to the ground by his word. He was a man of earnestness and determination; and he was so in his prayers. He prayed *earnestly* that it might not rain. He *besought* the Lord for the child. He bowed himself *seven* times to the earth before any

sign of the returning rain appeared. It is the fervent, effectual, determined prayer, that availeth much with God. It is not the cold, lifeless prayer, that we forget as soon as we have uttered. This never reaches heaven. It falls to the ground as it proceeds from our lips. Prayer has been compared to an arrow, which if just laid on the bow-string makes no ascent, but if drawn to the point pierces the skies. And it is not from loose, unstrung souls that prayer darts to heaven, but from souls fully bent, and strongly bowed in fervent feeling. The Spirit's intercession for us is 'with groanings that cannot be uttered'; and when we pray in the Spirit, we shall lift the prayer with a fervour and supplicating earnestness that will not be denied.

We see, then, where our strength lies, and with what our spiritual prosperity is inseparably associated. It is with earnest, believing, associated prayer. This is the great want of the Church, and nothing else can supply it. We may have our systems and organisations improved and adjusted. We may have our chapels crowded and multiplied. We may have our ministers laborious and eloquent. We may have our schools enlarged, filled, and orderly. We may have our classes spread out in all our societies until our system of agency shall be extended everywhere. But if there be not prayer—fervent, earnest prayer—it is the arm of flesh vaunting itself in the place of Divine omnipotence, and cannot succeed. It is dependence on the wheels and not upon the Spirit in the midst of the wheels. It is a daring contempt of God, that must be frowned upon. It is the sin of Meribah, that must be punished. Let this, then, be the subject of our

thoughts and of our pursuits, prayer to God—and with every one of us. Do we pray? Let this be the first subject of inquiry with your ministers—Do they pray? Not whether they have gifts and accomplishments, but do they pray. Not whether they are admired leaders in popular movements and excitements, but do they pray. A minister is to give himself wholly to *prayer* as well as to the Word of God. 'Three things,' says Martin Luther, 'make a minister, study, affliction, and *prayer*.' If a minister were an apostle and did not pray, his ministry would be worthless. If he had the gift of prophecy; understood all mysteries, and all knowledge; if he had faith to remove mountains; gave all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned; though he spake with the tongues of men and of angels, and did not pray, it would all be as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. So with the Church and the officers of the Church. It is when the Church offers believing prayer that the ministry is successful. Not when it is said, 'Well, this sermon must do good. It is so clear, so convincing, so persuasive, or so well adapted to the times,' but when believers pray. There is no knowing how often the word has been hindered in its course by self-sufficiency and by want of prayer. Christ Himself could not do many mighty works, because of their unbelief. Brethren pray for us, said an inspired apostle; and he speaks of the members of the Churches as striving together with their ministers in their prayers. And so with leaders and local preachers, and all the various officers of the Church. They may be numerous and zealous and active, foremost in benevolence, enterprising and urgent, but do they *pray?*

They may be ever ready with plans and counsel, saying how this ought to be done, and that ought to be attended to. But do they pray? Do they stir up themselves to take hold on God's strength? or do they with all this bustle and activity, 'restrain prayer before God'? If so, they are a hindrance and not a help to the cause of Christ. They have forgotten and forsaken the Lord God of Elijah, and without Him they can do nothing.

Let us then *feel*, as well as acknowledge, this great want of the Church and attain it. Let us seek the help and blessing of God by prayer. Let us while we think of the past, and call to remembrance the mighty deeds wrought by prayer, cry out as did Elisha in an agony of believing desire, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And we shall find Him nigh at hand and not afar off. We shall find Him the same to-day as yesterday. The same now as in the days of our fathers, and in the days of the prophet. Say not that this is not the age of miracles, and we are not now to look for such signal and speedy answers to prayer. It is the age of conversions, if not of miracles. God has not ceased to save souls, or woe be to our poor, lost world. Every conversion is by the direct interposition of the Divine power. It is a spiritual miracle. We believe that the Lord God still saves sinners; that He still brings them out of darkness into marvellous light. And will anyone say that the world has yet seen anything comparable to what it will see in the way of conversion? Was the gift of the Holy Spirit to convince and to save men once for all on the day of Pentecost? Was He given in His greatest fulness

then? Or was not His coming then in accordance with the feast of first fruits at which He came? Was not that the pledge and earnest of more abundant outpourings of His grace and power? Are there not great and precious prophecies and promises of still more extensive blessings from on high? Is not a nation to be born in a day? Is not the whole earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, even as the waters cover the sea? And when will the Holy Spirit come down in these 'showers of blessing,' in these 'floods upon the dry ground'; when shall this wilderness become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest? It will be when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high, and that in answer to prayer. When Christ's kingdom shall fully come, 'prayer shall be made for Him continually.' And so shall it be with the society here. Its prosperity—its increase—shall be when the society prays for it; when the spirit of prayer fills the Church; when all who feel the saving power of God wrestle and agonise for those who are unsaved; when the whole Church cry out in earnest, believing prayer, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?'

Let us then *seek, as our first great want,* to be supplied with the spirit of prayer. We have seen what it achieved in days that are past; and God is the same now to hear and to answer prayer, as He was in the days of our fathers; in the days of apostles and prophets. Elijah's God is our God. Let us go like him, and bow ourselves seven times to the earth; and long as the drought may have continued; parched and dry as the land may be; cloudless as the sky may be; we shall quickly see rising a cloud the size of a

man's hand, which shall suddenly spread and enlarge until the whole heavens shall be covered by it, and it shall be said, 'There is a sound of abundance of rain.' Let us begin now to bow ourselves. Let us pray now—'Lift up your hearts to the Divine Being for His grace and salvation. Pray as long as you remain in this sanctuary. Go home praying; pray in your families; pray in retirement; come to the house of God praying; support the preacher with prayer while he is preaching; attend the meetings for social and associated prayer; breathe the spirit of prayer while you are at business and at labour; rest not, cease not to pray for the revival of God's work; rest not, cease not to breathe—ay, even in the street to breathe your desires for the conversion of sinners. Resolve that for Jerusalem's sake you will give God no rest until He make her a praise on the earth. On your knees at home, in the assemblies of the Church, while hearing the word, and while associating for Christian fellowship and communion, cry out in the earnestness of your soul, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah?' And soon the reviving power will be manifested—the drooping, mourning Church will lift up its head, and the rejoicing time will come. Yea, if you have begun to pray, it is at hand now; and it may be said, 'The winter is past,' &c., &c. 'The Lord will comfort Zion,' &c., &c.

III.

THE BROKEN AND CONTRITE HEART.

'A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.'—
PSALM li. 17.

IN how many instances have we exemplified the Divine declaration: 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord.' But in no instance is this declaration more strikingly illustrated than in the subject to which the text relates. 'A broken heart!' What an overwhelming weight of misery is expressed by these few brief words! They denote a state of concentrated, swollen, overpowering wretchedness, at once the most bitter and crushing that can possibly be conceived, and from which the human mind recoils with fearful dismay. Nothing on earth is more expressive of accumulated sorrow, or of poignant, hopeless anguish for man, than the sentence—'His heart is broken.' No greater calamity for him can possibly be proclaimed; and from the contemplation of such a state of unrelievable, consummated distress, mankind turn with shuddering horror as from that which is to be dreaded and shunned before all other states that could be possibly contemplated. And in the estimation of the ungodly, it is so with brokenheartedness for sin. It is pitiless mourning and wretchedness, at once the most degrading and repugnant.

How differently is this subject represented in the sacred Scriptures, which so clearly and positively

reveal to us the mind of God! They set brokenness of heart before us as a state at once the most valuable and attractive that can possibly be thought of and desired. They associate it, not with hopeless desperation, but with sure relief, and ordained advancement and happiness. 'Blessed are they that mourn,' says the Saviour, 'for they shall be comforted.' And the Bible throughout sets forth inward, spiritual grief as sacred, claiming reverential regard; and as being a state not to be shunned and avoided with abhorrence, but to be diligently sought, and to be welcomed and congratulated where possessed. It declares the broken, crushed heart to be beneficial to man, the cause of increasing joy to angels, and acceptable to the Almighty. This relieving and encouraging view is presented in the text, which affirms that a broken and contrite heart is not despised by the Divine Being, but is the most acceptable offering that man can possibly present to Him. 'Thou desirest not sacrifice,' says the psalmist in immediate connection with these words, 'else would I give it'; I would freely offer unto Thee upon the altar of the sanctuary, and before the eyes of all Israel, the finest and most costly victims. But this is not what Thou desirest and hast delight in. These may be vain abominations before Thee. The really acceptable sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a spirit shivered and crushed within itself for sins committed—'A broken and a contrite heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise.' Let us view this subject as here presented to us, not in the language of man, but in the word of the Lord, which abideth for ever, and we shall find, that while penitential sorrow for sin is accounted by the ungodly to be abject and

degrading, it is intimately and surely associated with our highest well-being. In doing this we shall have to inquire into that *state of spiritual experience* expressed in the words, 'A broken and a contrite heart'; and *how,* or *upon what grounds* such a state is so pre-eminently acceptable to God as here declared.

FIRST, then, we have to inquire into *that state of inward spiritual experience here described by* the *words,* 'A broken and a contrite heart.'

And, at once, it may be observed that it is a state tenderly impressible and of *deep sensibility.* It is not a state of 'hard, impenitent heart,' which incorrigible sinners are in, as represented by the apostle, when he speaks of their 'treasuring up for themselves,' by their confirmed and insensible wickedness, 'wrath against the day of wrath.' It is a state in which the heart within is rent asunder with feeling, and in which the spirit is crushed down under an overwhelming load, too heavy to be borne. The two expressions 'broken spirit,' and 'broken and contrite heart' are not here employed to represent two different states, or even a combination of two kinds of feeling and experience, but to represent one and the same state. As in other passages of Scripture parallelisms, especially in the book of Psalms, the same truth is repeated and spread out for expansion and impression by the use of the same or similiar terms; so here, 'spirit' and 'heart' —'broken' and 'contrite'—signify the same truth of crushed, prostrate penitence. Just as it is in Psalm xxxiv., where it is declared, 'The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.' There is no longer the 'heart of stone,' as described by Ezekiel; the hard, cold, dead,

unfeeling heart, as devoid of sensibility as the lifeless statue on the pedestal, or the unexcavated granite in the quarry. This has been taken away, and the 'heart of flesh' has been put within—the soft, warm, living heart, susceptible of feeling, and which does not, as stone, repel the blow, but bows down under it, wounded, bruised, and bleeding. The spirit is broken and the heart is crushed, or contrite, under heavy weighted guilt and condemnation. It is a state of inward sensitiveness of feeling, in which the very heart is riven asunder, and in which the spirit is bowed down, wounded and crushed.

Such is the state of the real penitent before God. His heart and spirit within are broken and crushed. And in this, more than in outward manifestation of looks, gestures, tears, or cries, true penitence for sin is to be known. Some persons are far more outwardly emotional than others. They shed tears, they utter exclamations, and they fall into paroxysms of outward distress. Others are calm, silent and retiring. Like the wounded deer they drag themselves into the thicket to hide their suffering. It is not from tears and verbal lamentations that you can judge the depth of inward feeling. Some persons will weep and lament at the loss of a trifle; others cannot shed tears at the death of the most beloved friend or relative,—though to weep would be a real relief to a heart full charged, and ready to break with grief. But whatever may be the outward manifestations of real penitence, the inward heart is broken on account of sins committed, and the spirit is bowed down and crushed under a sense of guilt and defilement. It is not the knowledge of sin which constitutes repentance, nor the confession

of it. Most persons know that they are sinners, and are ready to declare themselves such. There is with true penitence *conviction for sin,* which pierces and wounds the heart and spirit within. Impenitent men *know* that they are sinners, but penitents *feel* that they have sinned. There is felt and acknowledged condemnation for sin by the righteous law of God. Before, the law which brought condemnation seemed arbitrary, rigorous and severe; but now it is seen and felt to be holy, just and good. It is perceived and admitted that it could not be otherwise in righteousness. And with conviction for sin, and condemnation for sin, there is *sorrow for it.*—Inward, deep, pungent grief which rends the heart asunder, and bows down the spirit under an unbearable load of feeling. It is felt to have been 'an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God.' And this leads to *resolute abandonment of sin,* and *determined obedience, henceforth, to all the Divine commands.* It is not simply sorrow and remorse, however great, which constitutes repentance. If it were so then Cain, and Ahab, and Saul, and Judas, were penitents; and then hell itself might be spoken of as being the abode of penitents—for in it there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Repentance is turning from sin to obedience. Conviction for sin brings condemnation; and sorrow for sin leads to forsaking it. 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance.' This is the fruit and result of its operation. Sorrow for loss and suffering through sin—sorrow for detection in crime—sorrow for ruin of reputation and health—may only be the 'sorrow of the world which worketh death.' It may lead to melancholy, madness and suicide; and, withal, there may be no inward, heart-

breaking grief for sin. How many persons have professed repentance in sickness, and when in imminent peril, but have returned to the ways of sin as soon as health and apparent deliverance returned. Like Pharaoh, who repeatedly promised to let Israel go, when the plagues of Egypt threatened him and his people; but, his heart being hardened, he resumed oppression as soon as the plagues were removed. Even professed infidels have called upon God in the sea-storm which threatened their lives. And when the lightnings glare, and the thunder rolls—when the earthquake yawns, and the volcanic eruption belches forth—when the cholera rages, and the deadly fever spreads—then there are confessions of guilt, and cries for mercy, abundant. Then places of worship are crowded, and prayer meetings are thronged. But when the consequences of sin are mitigated, and its punishments withdrawn, then the heart and life return to their former course, and sin is cherished and practised as before. In all genuine penitence there is *loathing* of it, and *turning from it* with heart breaking sorrow on account of it. This was the penitence of *Job* when he exclaimed, 'Behold I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' This was the penitence of *Hezekiah*, whose soul mourned like a dove and chattered as a swallow. This was the penitence of the *Prodigal* when he exclaimed, 'Father, I have sinned,' and who not only resolved upon reflection to return, but actually arose and came to his father. This was the penitence of the *Publican* who smote upon his breast and prayed, 'God be merciful unto me a sinner!' This was the penitence of *Peter* who, under conviction for sin, at the look of Jesus went out and wept bitterly,

and afterwards confessed Christ unto death. This was the penitence of the *Jailor at Philippi,* who not only trembled at the earthquake, but brought Paul and Silas out of the inner prison and washed their stripes. And all others who have experienced repentance unto life, whether swearers like *John Bunyan,* or boastful unbelievers like *Col. Gardiner,* have forsaken the wicked way—have ceased to do evil, and learned to do well.

What an *illustrious example* of genuine, heart-broken, praying, reforming repentance have we in *David,* the writer of this psalm. It almost reconciles us to his fall to have his example and language of penitence to profit by. Infidels sneer at him as a fallen saint; but considerate and candid believers will ever look reverently and admiringly upon him as a repentant sinner. If few professed servants of God have fallen more foully, few have repented more thoroughly. High as he was in state and fame—though an eastern monarch with despotic power, where morals were loose, and impurity common, yet he composed this penitential psalm, and gave it, as headed, 'to the chief musician,' for public use and service in the congregation of Israel; and most likely, as affirmed by tradition, with the crown laid aside, with sackcloth upon his loins, and with many tears he recited audibly what he had previously prepared, and what he had given to the leader of singers, audibly in the sanctuary. And what a burst of supplication—what an imploring cry of acknowledged sin and helplessness have we at the beginning of the psalm—'Have mercy upon me, O God!' I deserve no benefit from Thee in the heinousness of my offence; but have pity

and compassion upon me, 'O God,' before whom I stand and pray. He appeals to the known disposition of God in His 'lovingkindness' and in His abounding and multiplied acts of the gentlest forbearance towards the children of men. As if he had said, 'My aggravated case needs all the love and kindness and compassion there is in Thee; and in its long continued sinfulness, and combined acts of wickedness—of adultery, murder, treachery, hypocrisy, and hardened insensibility—it needs all the multiplied mercy there is in Thee; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies, which from the beginning of the world have been innumerable—"blot out my transgressions"—erase every record of them, so that no remembrance of them shall remain against me, and let this be done with my "transgressions"—not errors, faults, frailties, but "transgressions"—and with *all* of them. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." I am not only guilty, needing the handwriting of condemnation to be blotted out, but I am polluted and defiled throughout my entire nature. I am saturated with impurity—therefore, wash me throughly—over and over again—and cleanse me—make me wholly and entirely pure.'

Observe the emphasis to be placed on *mine* iniquity, and on wash and cleanse *me* from my sin. 'For I acknowledge my transgressions.' I do not seek to hide or conceal them. They are too flagrant and abominable for that. They have been public, and publicly I confess them. 'And *my sin* is ever before me.' It is ever in remembrance, wherever I go, oppressing me and weighing me down. 'Against *Thee* have I sinned, and done evil in Thy sight.' Not

that he forgot the wrong and injury done to Uriah and his family, and to the nation by its evil influence, —but the essence of sin is that it is disobedience to God, and to think that he had done that in secret, where the eye of the Almighty was open upon him, and which he would not have ventured upon, if a servant or a child had been present. How criminal and aggravating such conduct! 'That Thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.' The condemnation is just, for the transgression is positive, and obvious. 'Behold,' says he, 'I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.' The evil was in his very nature, and wrapped up in the very beginning of his existence. The corruption in him had broken out thus alarmingly. This he states, not to reproach the mother who bore him, who was, as he declares elsewhere, the handmaid of the Lord, nor to excuse himself on the ground that it was natural for him to do this evil; but as an aggravation of his state of sinfulness. He was like the serpent, poisonous in his very nature, and to be abhorred as such. 'Behold!' again he exclaims amidst the wonders of his case, 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts'—not merely in outward semblance and and profession, but in the seat and source of thought and desire,—'and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom'—not only in external morals of man to man, but in that which man does not see, and which is hidden from his view. I shall, if Thou forgive and cleanse me, know the truth and love it.

'Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.' Sprinkle the atoning and cleansing blood upon me, so that I may no longer be as the ceremonially unclean,

who have been defiled by the dead, or shut out from the congregation as the leper. 'Wash me' in the laver of purification, 'and I shall be whiter than snow.' I shall be more pure than nature in its purest part—than snow, which gathers to itself dust and smoke, and defilement of various kinds. Here is prayer for sanctification as well as justification, which every enlightened penitent sinner feels his need of, especially when he has fallen from grace previously received. And here is what there is in all evangelical repentance, faith and hope—belief in God's power and mercy to save, and expectation of His full salvation. Despairing unbelief is not God's work in the soul.

Having thus prayed for forgiving mercy and thorough purity, he now ventures a petition for comfort and enjoyment. 'Make me to hear joy and gladness;'—for no voice is so sweet and elevating to me as the voice which speaks my sins forgiven, and bids me be clean—'that the bones which Thou hast broken,'—crushed, dislocated, and shivering under the sense of Thy wrath, may rejoice under the tokens of Thy favour. 'Hide Thy face from my sins,'—turn away from beholding, 'and blot out all mine iniquities.' One prayer is not sufficient in his case of deep criminality, therefore he repeats in substance the supplication he had made at the beginning. Yea, nothing less than a new creation within me—producing there what was not before will serve; and nothing less than the almighty, creative power which produced the world at the beginning can accomplish what I need. '*Create* in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right'—a constant, upright, faithful and obedient 'spirit within me.' 'Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take

not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' Banish me not as Thou didst murderous Cain. Depart not from me as Thou didst from unfaithful, disobedient Saul. Let me not be as the polluted leper, shut out from the congregation, and shut out from the sanctuary, Thy dwelling place—and take not what I have undeservedly had—'Thy Holy Spirit from me'—for without Him I can have no good and no consolation. 'Restore unto me' what I had before this shameful fall, when conscious of Thy favour—'the joy of Thy salvation,' and uphold me with Thy free Spirit'—Thy Spirit of freedom and joyful liberty, delivering and preserving me from bondage.

'Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways.'—Thy ways of undeserved mercy and multiplied forgiveness, and sinners such as I have been shall be instructed and encouraged by my case, and 'shall be converted unto Thee.' Man shall be saved, and God shall be glorified thereby. 'Deliver me from blood-guiltiness.'—His murderous crime again rises to his view, with its threatened penalty, and he again prays for deliverance from its deep condemnation and just desert. And this prayer he offers with increasing confidence. Before with awe and fear he had exclaimed, 'O God!' but now he says, 'Thou God of my salvation.' Before he had prayed for the recovery of joy which he had forfeited, now he speaks of 'singing aloud;'—proclaiming and exulting before others, and that loudly, of God's righteousness in mercy. 'Open Thou my lips'—which have long been closed in guilty silence—and my *mouth*—the portal and instrument of song—'shall show forth audibly Thy praise.' 'For Thou desirest not sacrifice'—outward show of offerings,

which are of creatures made and *owned* by Thee, and which can never make the comers to Thine altar perfect—can never in themselves atone for sin, or propitiate Thine anger—'else would I give it.' I would heap up bleeding victims before Thee of the choicest and most costly kind. But 'the sacrifices of God,'—which Thou dost desire and accept,—'Are,' what I now present before Thee, 'a broken spirit'—a crushed and bleeding heart—and a heart thus broken down under a sense of its guilt and defilement, and wounded and crushed under conscious guilt and impurity, 'O God, Thou wilt not despise.' Here, by this psalm, is a royal penitent, and an eminent example of broken heartedness and contrition for sin set before us. And then, as with all genuine, penitent seekers of salvation, there break forth desires and declarations concerning the extension of Divine service and glory. Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion, which I have dishonoured and hindered by my inconsistent criminality, and build up the Church which I have injured—'build Thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt Thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.'

Such is the *broken hearted contrite state* of a real penitent sinner set forth in the text, and as exemplified in the person of the psalmist who wrote it. There is in it sharp, piercing conviction for sin, acknowledged righteous condemnation on account of it, deep, pungent sorrow for its commission, absorbing concern for deliverance, not only from the penal consequences of sin, but also from its power, and, withal, earnest, hopeful, and believing prayer for Divine mercy to

cancel the past, and to uphold and preserve from falling into it in the future. And such a state is declared to be acceptable to God. For the negative form of expression employed is most emphatically positive and assuring in its meaning. As, for instance, while it is stated: 'A mother may forget her sucking child, yet will I *not* forget Thee.' Again on the pre-eminence of Christ's priesthood, in its sympathy for His followers: 'We have not a high priest who *cannot* be touched with a feeling for our infirmities. So here —'a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt *not* despise.' The strongest form of assertion that such a heart is highly acceptable to Him.

SECONDLY, let us inquire *on what grounds,* or *for what reasons* it is known to be so.

1. And first, we may observe, that a broken and contrite heart is undoubtedly acceptable to God in being *the fruit,* or *result of His own Divine operations. He* has broken the heart; *He* has bruised and wounded the spirit; and will *He* despise that which He Himself has wrought? Assuredly not. All God's works, as in creation, at the beginning, are 'very good,' and are to be viewed with complacency and delight. God alone can break the rocky heart of impenitent sinfulness. Mere mental reflection will not do this; for intellectual, thoughtful, reflective persons do not with certainty repent of sin—though consideration, under God, is the forerunner of repentance. Losses, afflictions and judgments do not of themselves break down the haughty spirit of man into prostrate contrition, though they may be followed by such a state. The savage mastiff may be beaten and lashed back into his kennel, and yet be unsubdued in anger and fury.

And Pharaoh, Ahab, Saul and others named in Scripture, are recorded proofs that losses, afflictions and judgments do not bow down the impenitent heart of man. It is the *Holy Spirit* who breaks the heart, and crushes the spirit under a sense of heavy condemnation, and innate, flagrant sinfulness.

What a highly intelligent man was *David!* How sensitive in his whole nature! Did he not know that God punished the guilty, and inflicted judgments upon them, even to depriving them of honour and life? Had he not seen this in the case of Saul, his predecessor? And yet he, the intelligent man of poetic sensibility; the reflective, instructed man sunk down for nearly a year into insensibility, amidst revolting crimes of adultery, murder, treachery and hypocrisy; not awaking out of it until moved and startled out of it by Nathan's touching parable of the ewe lamb taken from one who had most tenderly cherished it in his bosom, and until the prophet pointed the finger of direct accusation and faithful application to himself, and exclaimed, 'Thou art the man!' Then by the Spirit's fiery light, as under a flash of lightning, he saw and felt his guilt, trembled and wept on account of what he had known before in all its details. Oh no. It is not in man of himself, from his own knowledge, and by the sensibilities of his nature only, to bow down with rent heart and crushed spirit before the Lord, imploring mercy. That is the result of the Holy Spirit's operations. It is God who 'grants repentance unto life.' As the apostle declared, 'Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour to *give* repentance and remission of sins.' Will not, then, the Divine Being look favourably upon His own work? or upon

the fruit of His own operations? And, if so, how evident is the truth of the declaration here made—'A broken and a contrite heart, O God! Thou wilt not despise.'

The Almighty, however, works by *appropiate means*, and does not look for results without the use of them. It was so in the case of David. He sent Nathan to him to proclaim and apply the truth, and that in the most affecting and powerful manner. It was the truth, not generally, or in detail simply as known by the king; but the truth as revealing *his* deep criminality in the position he held in taking advantage of his own servant's absence—taking away that servant's life—and in bringing public scandal upon Israel, by causing the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; and all this in ungrateful disobedience to God, Who had raised him from the sheepfold to the throne, and had lavished upon him abundance of all that his heart could desire. And it is still the truth brought home to the heart by the Spirit of God which breaks it down into penitence and self-abasement. It may be spoken, written, or printed. It may be uttered with maternal voice to listening infancy. It may be uttered gently in the Sunday-school class. It may be read from the Scriptures bound in morocco and gilt, or from a Tract uncovered. It may be whispered at the bed-side of the sick, or it may be proclaimed from the pulpit in the sanctuary. But, in all cases, it is the *truth* applied by the Spirit to the heart which breaks and subdues it. This is the Spirit's sword which pierces to the inmost region of the soul, and becomes a discerner of the very thoughts and intents of the heart. This was the sword of the Spirit wielded by Peter on the

day of Pentecost, when that Divine weapon was afresh bathed in the lightnings of heaven, and when 3,000 sinners of Jerusalem, where Jesus had been crucified, were pricked in the heart, and cried out, 'Men and brethren, what must we do?' This was the instrument by which Paul, the persecuted prisoner, made Felix the Roman governor tremble on the judgment-seat. And this is still the Holy Spirit's ordained instrumentality for awakening sinners from insensibility and bringing them to repentance.

It is not, however, truth which threatens and condemns that bows down the spirit with penitence. It is *truth which affects by its representations of goodness and love.* This was the truth which broke down David to contrition. The story of the ewe lamb taken from the bosom of him who had nothing else, and that by the cruel despotic being who possessed all that could be desired; the recital of what God had done for him in taking him from being the keeper of a few poor sheep in the wilderness,—this moved and affected him—rent his heart asunder under a sense of ingratitude, and crushed him to the earth with penitential sorrow. This drew from his broken and contrite heart the exclamation, 'Against *Thee*'—my bounteous benefactor and friend of my life—'have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.' This led him to bemoan so loudly his corrupt and polluted nature; and this wrung from his heart and soul the bitter cry, 'Have mercy upon me!'—'Purge me with hyssop'—'wash me'—'create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.' And it is when the goodness and the love of God are brought home to the sinner's heart, in the remembrance of providential

mercies, and especially in the gift of Christ to suffer and die for sinners, that the spirit is broken. Then, by Gospel evangelical truth, the heart is rent asunder and the spirit is crushed down to mourning penitence. 'I have sinned,' as David said to Nathan, says the sinner—and 'against Thee'—the God of my life, and the God of goodness and love, have I sinned and done this evil in *Thy* sight.' I am a base ingrate—a vile, loathsome wretch, unworthy of life, and justly condemned to death. And then is the mourning over original depravity, and over the aggravating circumstances of wickedness, such as David expressed in this psalm. And if this be by the Spirit's own operation, through His own truth, and in relation to His own beloved Son, will He view it with indifference and contempt? 'A broken and a contrite heart He *will not* despise.'

2. Further, He will not despise that state of broken-hearted penitence, inasmuch as it is the *only state in which transgressors can be rescued from perdition, and brought to possess and enjoy spiritual and eternal blessedness.* It is the revealed determination of the Almighty that except they repent they must perish. The hard and impenitent in heart heap up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath. But God willeth not the death of a sinner; but would rather that all men would repent and live. Therefore, He cries beseechingly, 'Turn ye! Turn ye! why will ye die, O house of Israel?' Then, when man turns and repents, will God look with indifference and displeasure upon him? Will He not behold the heart-broken, contrite sinner with complacency and delight?

And, by repentance, sinful man is *introduced to*

spiritual and *eternal blessings.* We forget not that the Scriptures declare that man is saved by faith—that 'without faith it is impossible to please God'—and that all blessings of pardon, justification, sanctification, preservation and eternal life are by faith. But, without repentance, there is no saving, evangelical faith. It is only the humble, contrite soul that *can* and will believe. Man is justified by faith alone, as the Scriptures teach, and as the preachers of the Protestant Reformation were careful to proclaim. But justifying faith is not alone. Repentance is before it. Repentance is the forerunner of faith, as John the Baptist was to Christ, and as the Law was to the Gospel. And, therefore, 'repentance toward God' is a condition of salvation as positive as 'faith toward the Lord Jesus, &c.' Repentance is the travail of the soul for its new birth. It is the 'strait gate' of entrance to the narrow path which leads to eternal life. It is the discordant sound of the prelude before the concert notes to follow. It is the spring time of bitter buds before the summer of flowers and fruits. It is the twilight of coming day. It is the sorrow which endures for a night before joy comes in the morning. It is that state of heart and spirit which all the saints on earth and in heaven have experienced. *Abel,* the first who went to Paradise, and the man of the longest immortality, experienced it. *Enoch,* who walked with God and glided painlessly into heaven without dying. *Abraham,* the friend of God, now seated with Isaac and Jacob at the banquet of the skies. *Moses,* the meekest of men, and the leader of Israel, buried by the Almighty Himself. *Joshua* and *Caleb,* who followed the Lord fully and gained the land

of promise. Upright *Samuel*, praying *Elijah*, rapturous *David*, exultant *Isaiah*, sorrowful *Jeremiah*, penitent *Peter*, persecuting *Saul* of Tarsus, *Apostles*, *Martyrs*, *Confessors*, and the saved of all nations, kindreds and tongues, all experienced repentance unto life. Then will He, who knows the connection of things, and their utmost results and consequences, be indifferent to what not only leads to faith in Christ, by which men are saved, but also to heaven and eternal life, despise the broken and contrite heart? Assuredly not.

Then let us not *undervalue this state of penitence and contrition*, but rather let us cherish and deepen it. Too little is made of repentance in our day. Salvation is shown to be so easy and free by faith, especially in Methodism, that repentance is in danger of being hidden and neglected—although, as we have seen, men must repent to believe the Gospel. Do not, I pray you, slight this essential subject. It is all important to you. Yield yourselves to God that it may be wrought within you. Consider! Reflect what you are. A sinful being who must repent or perish. A dying transgressor whose probation may terminate at any moment, and who shall at death enter upon an unchangeable and eternal state. Think what it must be to pass in an instant from life on earth to everlasting perdition. Think what are the probabilities of eternal death. More men die in their sins than repent and believe unto salvation. The way to destruction is broad and *many* go thereon. The path to heaven is strait and *few* find it. So that the doctrine of probabilities is against you. You are more likely, from numbers, relatively, to be lost than to be saved. Do not avoid these considerations on the ground that they

are sensational, and because some decry excitement. *Excitement!* Tell the man in a falling building, or on board a sinking vessel to be unexcited. Tell the person at the edge of a yawning earthquake to be unexcited. But do not tell the threatened, sinking, perishing sinner for whom hell is enlarging itself, and moves from beneath to meet him, to be unexcited. Excitement! If all the unregenerate sinners in this sanctuary were now to send forth one loud wail and shriek of alarm and fear, it would but feebly express the perilous state of sinners unsaved. Do not avoid repentance—seek it—pray for it—strive for it. Do not let anything erase from your mind any impression of sinfulness that has been made there. Separate yourself from the companionship of the impenitent. Their indifference and levity will corrupt and destroy you. The righteous could not get to heaven with them—much less you who are not righteous. Read the Scriptures! Search them, and ponder the things spoken of in them in your hearts. Pray over them—cry to God to enlighten your mind and to break your heart within you. Attend the means of grace regularly. Wander not from sanctuary to sanctuary—following preacher after preacher. You want sobriety, meditation, devoutness of spirit, and not dissipation. You shall find salvation, if you 'follow on to know the Lord.' And, remember that, to the Gospel penitent inquiring for salvation, the apostolic answer is, '*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' The Saviour's own declaration is, 'Whosoever believeth on the Son hath eternal life.' Believe that God loves you—that Christ died for you—that the Holy Ghost is now working in you repentance unto life. Bring your guilty, polluted,

ungrateful, rebellious, but now broken and contrite heart unto the altar of the cross. Rest it there—rely upon the infinite merit of the Saviour's atonement—exclaim, 'He died for me, and I trust in Him'; and thou shalt know by the Spirit given unto thee that thy offering is not rejected; and that a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise. Yea, if your heart feel hard within you, lay it on that altar of sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit will there break it—and if your nature be red as crimson or scarlet with sinfulness—saturated throughout, it shall be purged and washed throughout, and become whiter than snow.

IV.

THE DYING, PENITENT THIEF.

'And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

—LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

THESE words, undoubtedly, record the most astonishing display of saving mercy ever made to mankind. In its solemn and impressive circumstances, it never can be equalled; for '*once* in the end of the world hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' He 'was *once* offered to bear the sin of many'; so that salvation promised audibly by Jesus to a praying sinner, when He Himself was expiring in mortal agony, never can be repeated. Nevertheless, in its representation of Christ as the Saviour of sinners, it is one of the most instructive and encouraging portions of Scripture written for our learning. It exhibits Jesus to us as the mighty God and Saviour of men at the hour of His apparent weakness, and as securing for Him the highest honour amidst scenes of the deepest degradation and scorn. Surely, in this instance, it is seen how 'He taketh the wise in their own craftiness,' and 'maketh the wrath of man to praise Him'! His enemies crucified Him between two notorious thieves, as if He were the worst transgressor of the three; and while hanging in seeming helplessness on the cross, exposed to open insult and reviling, He snatches from everlasting

perdition a malefactor by His side, who prays to Him amidst the burning agonies of dissolution. No miracle of power and compassion wrought in life by the Son of God among the suffering and the dying equals this miracle of Divine mercy, performed by Him when in the excruciating throes of death by crucifixion. To this solemn and yet glorious display of the Lord Jesus Christ, as 'able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him,' I would now direct your attention; for though, in its immediate and attendant circumstances, it can never be repeated, yet Jesus, the Saviour, remains 'the same to-day as yesterday'; and we shall find, on examination, that brief as was the period for application to Him by the expiring malefactor, and sudden as was his conversion and salvation, that he showed within that brief period all the essential disposition and proofs of a penitent believer. He will, therefore, instruct us in the way of application to Christ for saving mercy; and Jesus, by this rich display of His grace and power, will encourage our believing trust and confidence in Him. Let us, then, with solemn footsteps ascend the hill of Calvary, and devoutly hearken, First, to the prayer of the dying malefactor; and, Secondly, to the answer of the dying Redeemer.

I. *We are to hearken to the prayer of the dying malefactor.* 'And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.'

There can be no question concerning the *real character* of the man who offered this prayer. He is declared by St. Luke to have been a malefactor—that is, a convicted *evildoer* or transgressor, who, with his accomplice, was condemned to death for his crimes.

St. Matthew describes the companions of our Lord in death as 'thieves,' or more strictly rendered than in our translation, 'robbers,' or plunderers. Probably these two criminals belonged to the hordes of robbers who infested Judæa and the adjoining countries at that time, living upon the plunder they secured, not scrupling to take life when it was necessary to do so for their object. Barabbas, the murderer, given up to the Jews by request in preference to Christ, was most likely one of these banditti; and, though more notorious by name—perhaps a leader and desperado among them—yet, morally and criminally, I do not know that we have reason to conclude that they who were put to death were less guilty than he who had been formally, and by public nomination, released. And, considering the spirit and temper of the men who crucified our Lord, and how they sought in death to heap upon Him every possible indignity, and to sink Him down in the sight of all to the very lowest degradation, it seems only natural to conclude that when, in fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy: 'He was numbered with transgressors,' he was associated with men who had rendered themselves odious by their crimes; and that he was crucified between them, and thus made the central figure of execration, as if He was the greatest criminal of all.

The unnatural and repulsive conduct of one of the malefactors, at least, proves that they were men far gone in violent and cruel wickedness. Some interpret literally the plural terms employed by Matthew and Mark: 'The thieves who were crucified with Him threw the same in His teeth'; 'And *they* that were crucified with Him reviled Him.' They argue on the

ground of probability,—two of the evangelists employing plural terms, and one only the singular term,—and they ask why should we even suppose anything but a literal rendering when viewing St. Luke's record as commencing with the case of the malefactors at the point where Divine grace began to show itself in one; all the three narratives perfectly agree. Or, pleading for the verbal inspiration of every portion of Scripture, they deny the truth and propriety of departing from it in any instance whatever; and, therefore, require that the plural form, including both the thieves—*they* also who were crucified with Him—to have its literal signification. But by a common figure of speech, too well known to mislead, and which we find in use in other parts of the Gospel narrative—where the general is used for the particular; and the parties are spoken of in their class rather than in themselves as individuals—we may, in the exercise of 'charity which hopeth all things,' and puts the best construction possible on what is recorded even of wicked men, be allowed to assume that only one of the malefactors crucified with Christ railed on Him in His dying agonies; and that the penitent malefactor never did thus rail upon Him. Matthew and Mark set forth the scoffs, the taunts, and the open railing against Jesus when He hung suspended upon the cross, showing that passing travellers, chief priests, and soldiers joined in this open persecution of the dying Redeemer; and then, to exhibit this open and provoking insult to its real height of aggravation, they declared that 'the thieves who were crucified with Him threw the same in His teeth'—'*they* that were crucified with Him reviled Him.' Meaning by this, that men of the basest character

joined in the indignities; but not necessarily requiring literal application to the two, any more than when it is related of the disciples as to what was spoken on the loaves and the fishes: '*They* say unto Him, We have here but five loaves,' when only one of them, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, really spoke. Or when one of the evangelists records, 'His disciples had indignation' at the waste of Mary's poured forth ointment, when we learn from St. John that it was Judas, who also betrayed Him, who had had it, desiring to possess, for selfish and dishonest ends, the price of the ointment. True wisdom in interpretation of Scripture, no more than in other matters, will not push what is written to unnecessary extremes. Even in the few short words inscribed by Pilate for public reading over Christ on His cross, which are recorded by all the four evangelists, not two of them agree literally in their record—though all agree substantially—showing that the Scriptures are to be taken in their plain, common-sense meaning; and proving conclusively that the evangelists have not merely copied their narratives from each others writings, but give their own full, independent, truthful testimonies. We may, then, without disrespect or unfaithfulness to the Gospel record before us, take Luke's account literally, and Matthew and Mark's accounts generally, or, as grammarians would describe it, 'indeterminately,' and conclude that 'one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." But the other'—of a different spirit—'rebuked him.'

It is no uncommon thing, as you know, for associates in crime to differ greatly in spirit, and for one to be

completely hardened in guilt and in suffering, and for another to be subdued, relenting and sympathising; and it is so here with these two malefactors. The one is furious with vengeance even in death, and seeks only to be rescued from public shame and suffering; and the other acknowledges the justice of his punishment, and vindicates the innocence of Jesus, put to death between them. And, O! what a monster of criminality appears in the impenitent malefactor! A man who is himself dying in excruciating agony, joining in insulting persecution! Generally speaking, companionship in suffering produces mutual sympathy; and outcasts from the world, condemned to suffer and die together, do so with declared reconciliation and forgiveness towards each other, if they had been the most rancorous enemies in life. It is so even where the confession of one has involved the ignominious death of both. But here there is nothing to be forgiven, and nothing to stir up wrath, and yet there is furious rage and the most indignant reproach. What a horrid exhibition of human depravity is here! A man who is dying joining in open persecution. A wretched criminal suffering excruciating agony on the gibbet, with the full weight of his body suspended upon it, until that body throbs and burns in every part, and on the brink of eternity, not subdued at all in feeling; but joining the mocking multitude, who with wagging of their heads, and pouted lips and tongues, taunt and revile Him as a blaspheming impostor, and saying to the Redeemer, as it might be with an oath, 'If Thou art the superior personage to us that Thou boastfully professest Thyself to be—so innocent and Divinely powerful as declared—publicly prove it by

forcing from Thy hands and feet the nails driven through them, and binding Thee to that cross—by getting down from it, and by helping us down.' 'If Thou *be* Christ'—the professed Messiah—'save Thyself and us.' How hardened in guilt, I say, the man who in death could do this! And what a climax of accumulated insult have we here for the dying Saviour! A heathen moralist (Seneca) has observed: 'It is beastly rather than human to have no compassion on the dying.' Your indignation would rise to the utmost if you saw the public executioner torturing beyond what was necessary the worst crimnal suffering death in penalty; and the most inhuman murderers pronounced unfit to live are usually allowed to die on the gibbet in silence, or with the hush of pitying compassion. But how different it was with Jesus Christ in death! Hundreds—yea thousands, probably—joined in the most cruel and reproachful persecution of Him. The soldiers, who had acted under command as public executioners, when they had stripped Him of His clothing, nailed Him to the cross, reared Him up above the earth, posted over Him the accusation of Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews, sat down upon the ground and cast lots for His inner vesture, 'gaping upon Him with their mouths,' and mocked Him by offering to Him vinegar, mixed with gall, to drink in His thirst. They that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads, and saying: 'Thou that destroyest the temple and buildest it in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking Him, with the scribes and the elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be

the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.' But most humiliating and insulting of all, 'The thieves also, which were crucified with Him, threw the same in His teeth.' In this deepest humiliation, however, and amidst accumulated scorn and reproach, heightened to the full by a crucified malefactor's blasphemous taunt, the Saviour's highest glory shall appear, by saving from the very brink of perdition one who, by Divine grace, is prepared for salvation to the uttermost; and who, while soldiers, priests and gathered multitudes are mocking, exhibits all the dispositions and signs of a penitent believer in Jesus as the Son of God, and who prays: 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest to Thy kingdom.'

1. Observe the *godly fear* of this penitent malefactor. 'Dost not thou fear God?' says he to his companion in crime and punishment, 'seeing thou art in the same condemnation.' It is evident that this man felt the awfulness of his situation, as about to appear before his Maker, and answer for the deeds done in the body. He recognised another judge than Pontius Pilate, who had condemned him to death; another tribunal than that before which he had stood in the judgment hall of Jerusalem; and he wondered that the railing malefactor could speak as he did, not realising at the point of death that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' This, the fear of God, is the true beginning of repentance and conversion; and though alarm on account of the threatened punishment of sin is not in itself repent-

ance, yet it leads to it—especially with open and violent transgressors. 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'; and without the fear of God there is no salvation.

2. Notice, further, the penitent malefactor's *conviction and acknowledgment of the deepest criminality.* 'We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds,' was his spontaneous and open confession before those who had condemned him and his companion to the most shameful and painful death. Thus publicly acknowledging that his guilt was of the heaviest character, and deserved the severest punishment that could possibly be inflicted; that he was, in fact, unworthy to live. How different this is from the natural temper and conduct of a robber, and from the mere result of suffering, may be seen in the language of the reprobate malefactor, who, while dying himself, railed on the Saviour, and who sought only deliverance from punishment—'save Thyself and us'—as well as from the declarations of men in general, when suffering death for their crimes. How often do we hear of unyielding impenitence in criminals on the point of dropping into eternity; asserting their innocence in their last moments, though there has been the most conclusive evidence of their guilt; or else palliating their conduct by excuses and by accusations against others, as if it were brave and heroic to die with words of falsehood and vengeance upon their lips. But here, with this penitent malefactor put to death for his crimes, there is no complaint of false accusation; no quarrelling with the law, or with its punishment; but openly, in the face and hearing of those who had condemned and crucified him, he acknow-

ledged that he deserved all that was inflicted upon him, and that it was just that he should suffer and die as ignominiously as he did. Here then was not only conviction for sin, but also unreserved confession of it.

3. Yea, there was not only the acknowledgment of the perfect justice of his own punishment, but there was also *righteous vindication of the perfect innocence of Christ* and *earnest endeavour to bring to repentance his reprobate and perishing companion.* 'This man,' said he to the reviling malefactor, 'hath done nothing amiss.' He is fully clear of all the evil charged against Him. This was not spoken in revenge upon those who had falsely accused and unjustly condemned Christ to death, for in that case he would have made no mention of his own desert, but would rather have ranked himself with the innocent. It was public vindication and confession of Christ, and that before our Lord's most malignant and revengeful enemies. Such a declaration would not be likely to conciliate those before him, but rather to draw forth their more enraged vengeance upon himself. But he was ready to suffer for Jesus, and be true to Him at any cost.

And you further find in him what is observable in all true Gospel penitents—*abhorrence of sin* and *compassionate endeavour to turn others from it.* 'Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation?' Like David, 'he beheld transgressors and was grieved.' He could not bear to hear the Saviour reviled; and he sought to impress his companion with the solemnity of his position, and to turn him from such abhorrent conduct. As if he had said to the reproachful and impenitent malefactor, 'Do not add by thy insulting language to the sufferings of the

meek and innocent being dying between us. He has sufficient to bear in bodily, excruciating pain, and in the mental anguish which evidently presses upon Him, and which is crushing His righteous soul. Do not add to His unbearable weight of suffering thy reviling and blasphemous taunts; but, for thy own sake, turn from such evil and monstrous proceedings; fear God, before Whom thou, with all thy deep criminality, wilt almost immediately appear; for thou art dying also—thou art in the same condemnation of death.'

But with these marks and fruits of genuine repentance, there was *humble and earnest suit to Christ for salvation.* Turning from reproof and entreaty towards his brother malefactor, and raising his drooping head with eager look towards the Saviour, he prays, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy kingdom.' There was hope of salvation with all self-condemnation for the deepest criminality, as there is in every true Gospel penitent, and there was earnest prayer for Divine mercy. It was a truly modest prayer, denoting deep humility. It was for remembrance. Not for prominent place and signal honour with Christ, asking, 'As I have suffered with Thee, let me reign with Thee; as I have hung by Thy side on Calvary, let me sit by Thy side in heaven.' Conscious of deep sinfulness and real unworthiness, he seems as if he scarcely dare ask for what he needs —salvation by Christ. He asks for a back glancing thought only. As if he had prayed, 'Lord, when Thou hast passed from that cross to Thy throne, and art there crowned with glory and honour,—being surrounded and praised by a redeemed and sanctified

multitude—cast backwards one thought on the unworthy sinner who died calling upon Thy name. Lord, remember me—think of me—do not forget me—amidst the delights that shall fill Thy infinite and satisfied soul in heaven; think of me who now prays to Thee, 'Lord *remember* me.'

4. There was also *faith* and *strong faith*, shining through the prayer of this penitent malefactor. 'Lord,' says he to one who was suffering death at the hands of wicked men—thus ascribing to Him the very highest Divine title; for Lord Jehovah was the most exalted and the all-comprehending term employed among the Jews to represent the self-existent, perfect, independent God, the supreme and almighty governor of the universe; and no doubt this man was a Jew, and employed the term with its highest and fullest signification. And then there is not only faith expressed in his nature and supreme being, but also in our Lord's *spiritual* and *universal dominion*, for he speaks of Christ's entering into His kingdom. That could not be an earthly kingdom, such as unbelieving Jews and earthly-minded disciples had looked for in the Messiah; for Jesus was dying ignominiously under the prevailing power of his enemies. It was faith in His spiritual, heavenly and everlasting dominion. And it was greater faith then any found in Israel. Greater then in His own professed disciples, who had forsaken Him and fled with disappointed and broken hopes, saying sorrowfully, 'We trusted that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel.'

But *who is this* to whom he prays as Lord of heaven and earth, and of whose kingdom he speaks? To mortal view a condemned criminal like himself.

Jesus has been accused of blasphemy against God, and that by the professed guides and guardians of religion. He had made no defence against the accusation, or against the sentence of condemnation. With apparent weakness He had submitted to scourging, spitting and ridicule. He had publicly fainted under the weight of His cross, which He had gone forth bearing. He had been publicly stripped of His clothing; laid down upon the cross; nailed to it; raised up in the air, where He had been beheld as the helpless object of ribaldry and taunt. No rocks had yet been rent; no supernatural darkness had shrouded the scene; such as compelled the centurion to exclaim, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' But Jesus is thirsting, and fainting, and dying amidst the execrations of an excited mob, headed by chief priests and rulers, who denounce Him as a hypocrite and an impostor unfit to live. And yet this universal outcast, forsaken by His own disciples, who have fled from the scene, is addressed by this trembling, dying malefactor as the supreme and Divine Lord going to enter into His kingdom. Here is faith! While all the world rejects Jesus as the Son of God, a malefactor hanging by His side in death accepts and acknowledges Him. While priests are mocking and ridiculing His pretensions as the professed Messiah, a robber is praying to Him for remembrance. While His disciples have all forsaken Him and fled, covered with a cloud of doubts and dark suspicions, this poor, quivering, dying sinner sees a glory in the Saviour, which shall illumine for him the valley of the shadow of death. When all things have been stripped and torn from Christ—His character, His clothing, His

friends, His very skin and blood by scourging—and when no one remains to proclaim or confess His Messiahship—so that, perhaps, at that moment there was no other firm believer left on earth in the supreme Divinity of Jesus, and in Him as the Saviour of the world—this dying, perishing outcast trusts in Him implicitly and fully. And even when his impenitent companion is lifting up his blasphemous tongue against Christ, and saying to Him in open scorn, 'If Thou art the Son of God'—the superior personage to us, Thy companions in ignominious death, which Thou hast professed Thyself to be, prove it by tearing out the nails from Thy hands and feet, going forth alive from the cross, and then helping us down; this penitent malefactor says in substance: 'Thou art the Son of God, and wilt show it, not by coming down from the cross, and by saving our lives, but by entering Thy kingdom; and when Thou hast entered Thy kingdom, and art surrounded by myriads of saved and holy beings to whom Thou hast opened heaven; as they praise Thee, and cast their crowns before Thee, only think of me, for a thought from Thee will be salvation to me—such is Thy power and Divine glory.' Or it might be, remember me in Thy intercessions before the Father; for, as it has been observed, this dying malefactor would seem to have been the first to believe in the priestly intercession of Jesus Christ. But, whatever might be the precise meaning of the words employed, his substantial cry was for salvation—deliverance, spiritually and eternally, by the Saviour; and there was positive, confiding, appropriating faith expressed. There was no doubt interjected, as in the prayer of the distressed father, who said, 'If

Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.' He did not pray, 'If Thou art Jesus, the Son of God, and *shalt* triumph by that cross over sin, death and hell, then think of me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.' No, with all the energies of his soul gathered to a focus, and with the full assurance of faith, which confidently relies with the whole heart upon Christ for a sure salvation, he said, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.'

Where, we naturally ask, had this man gained all this knowledge of Christ's character and kingdom? and how had he learned and acquired this full exercise of faith in Christ? Where had he beheld the crown of sovereign dominion?—the throne, the sceptre, the robe of state that declared Christ king? This malefactor had seen no other crown but the crown of thorns which the soldiers plaited and put upon His head; no other throne but the cross; no other sceptre but the spike-nails that pierced His hands through and fastened them to the transverse beam of the gibbet; no other clothing of state than the mock robe wherewith He had been arrayed in Herod's court-yard; and no other ministers of state than the shouting rabble around Him on Calvary. Apart from Divine influence, such as every real penitent is under, the faith of the penitent malefactor cannot be fully accounted for. Whether he had seen and heard Christ before being convicted as a highway robber we know not. Whether he had seen any of the Saviour's stupendous miracles of healing and deliverance; or whether our Lord had preached salvation to him from the cross we cannot tell. But we are ready to say that with an open, sincere and divinely influenced soul there was

more than many sermons in what he had heard and seen on the way to Calvary, and at its summit. He had seen Him meekly led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before its shearers, opening not His mouth. He had witnessed His self-forgetful concern for the weeping daughters of Jerusalem; and when they stretched Him on the cross and nailed Him to it, amidst the crush of bones and sinews, he heard that mild, entreating voice lifted up to heaven, praying 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' He had heard of this accusation on which He had been condemned—that He had made Himself the Son of God. He had heard of Pilate's question: 'Art Thou a king?' He had seen the title or inscription fastened above His head on the cross: 'Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.' He had watched His meek and lowly countenance as He hung on the cross; and, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, collecting, combining and seizing the evidences thus presented of Christ as the Mighty God and Saviour of men; and, perhaps, under a compassionate approving look from Christ when reproving sin and asserting the innocence of Jesus, his faith sprang forth powerfully, so that on the cross, through the prickly thorn and streaming blood, he beheld the Redeemer of mankind, when, flinging a full soul into his petition, he cried in confident, self-appropriating faith: 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.'

Thus did the dying malefactor manifest 'repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ,' so as to show himself to all mankind, in after ages, a real penitent believer. Thus does he preach to us from the cross on the way into the kingdom of

heaven. Yea, thus do we learn how 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.' Blessed, saved, glorified believer in Jesus! Whatever depredations he committed on men and their possessions, he stole at last, as one has observed, a crown and a throne in Christ's everlasting kingdom; for, to his humble, earnest, confiding prayer, Jesus replied: 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' We pass now to—

II. *The dying Saviour's gracious answer.*

And if the answer of our Lord had not been heard and recorded, we might have been sure in the conclusion, that a prayer so humble, earnest and confiding, by one who felt himself ready to perish, and who discerned the majesty of Jesus in the darkest hour of his existence, would be heard and answered by Him who 'came to call sinners to repentance,' and to 'seek and to save that which was lost.' But, the Redeemer's answer was heard, and has been written for us verbally by St. Luke.

The word 'paradise,' as you know, signifies a garden of pleasure, and was understood by the Jews to represent the place of blissful repose in which the souls of the righteous rest with God between death and the resurrection. Hence, when they wished any departing friend a place in *Hades* or *Sheol*, the region of the righteous dead, they would say, 'Let his soul rest in the garden of Eden!' Jesus knew this current saying, and how it was understood by the the people; and to make known with certainty the immediate future abode of the dying malefactor, he said, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' Where paradise,

the place of righteous souls in the separate state, is, we do not know; nor can we tell fully what are its enjoyments. Endless conjectures have been indulged concerning it; but it is vain to dwell upon them, for they are only conjectures. There are three portions of Scripture in which the word 'paradise' is found. One in the book of Genesis, representing the garden of beauty and enjoyment, in which our first parents were placed, and where they walked and communed with God before the fall. Another, where St. Paul describes how he was caught up into the third heaven, and heard in paradise unspeakable words. And the third in the book of Revelation, where the promise is given, that 'to him that overcometh, shall be given to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' From which passages we learn that paradise is heaven—even the 'third heaven'—'the heaven of heavens,' where, in a state of purity, there is rest and enjoyment with God. It is the heavenly paradise, where stands unguarded and unprohibited the tree of life, to the fruit of which all therein have a right. No serpent lurks in that garden; no sunstroke falls upon them who dwell in it; no sorrow, no hunger, no pain, no death, nor any other signs of the curse are known there. There flows the river of the water of life, with trees bearing all manner of fruits on its sides. There is the throne of God and the Lamb; and there the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, doth feed them, and doth lead them to living fountains of water, and God doth wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Where paradise is we know not: whether pervading our planetary system or beyond it, we cannot

tell. Perhaps, it is not so far from us as some suppose. But, while unseen by us who are in the body, and beyond the reach of telescopic survey, this we know, it is the abode of Christ: 'Thou shalt be *with Me* in paradise.' Thou who hast confessed me before men, and vindicated my innocence before my murderers. Thou who hast bespoke my remembrance, and believed in my prevalent intercession before the Father, and in my power to save to the uttermost, shall be my friend and companion in the blissful region I am about to enter. 'Thou shalt be *with Me* in paradise.' Yes, where Christ is there shall His servants be also. 'To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.' 'To depart and to be with Christ is far better' than to remain upon the earth. Paradise is a place of blissful repose in the presence and companionship of Christ, so that 'blessed'—emphatically and supremely blessed—'are they that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.' This is *the* 'rest which remaineth for the people of God.' And this was the blessed rest promised by the dying Saviour to the dying malefactor. Thou shalt change the racking agonies of the cross, and condemnation for guilt, for blissful repose with me in the region of the righteous dead.—'Thou shalt be with me in paradise.' Not that the most full and perfect enjoyment was to be immediately possessed; for being unclothed, and without the body until the resurrection, the whole man cannot in heaven, during the intermediate state, have fulness and perfection of blessedness; but the soul's separate companionship with Christ, and with the redeemed

and saved of all nations, will be more than earth's first paradise regained.

And, observe, the *immediate* possession and enjoyment of the heavenly paradise, promised by the Saviour to the dying malefactor: '*To-day* shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' It was then the sixth hour of the Jewish day, answering to our third hour after the meridian, and by the ninth hour, that is, by six o'clock in the afternoon, he was to be with Christ in paradise. He was not to hang there suffering burning agony for days, as some crucified malefactors had done; nor was he to be long after Jesus in entering paradise; for though Christ should die before the malefactor's legs should be broken, and should go down and proclaim redemption to the spirits confined in a separate state, before his companion in suffering and death should follow him; yet the interval of separation should be brief—to-day—by six o'clock, within three hours from that time, he should be with Christ in paradise.

Here, then, is no sleep of the soul in unconsciousness, between death and the resurrection, which some have taught, set before us; no long night without a dream; but immediate, instant passage at death to conscious blessedness in the presence of Christ. This is what was believed in by the psalmist when he says, 'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.'

This is what is declared by the Apostle St. Paul in the declarations of being with Christ, on absence from the body, and on departure from earth. This our Lord taught in the parable of the Rich Man and

Lazarus: for when the beggar died, he was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. This was what He prayed for on behalf of His followers: that they might be with Him where He is, and behold His glory. This was what He promised: that where He is, there, they should be also. And this is what John saw in the apocalyptic vision, when he saw the souls of those who had been beheaded before the altar where Christ ministered in priestly mediation. There is no interval of unconsciousness between death and the resurrection, as some would have us believe. Men may argue upon this dreamless night as they will, and try to reconcile us to it by saying that the soul being unconscious of the interval, a moment and a million of ages would be the same, and that the moment of falling asleep and the moment of waking will be as one. Argue as they will, we know the real effect upon the human mind. To the righteous it will appear so much time lost; and to the wicked so much time gained. Therefore we continue earnestly to insist upon this real and certain doctrine of Scripture—the soul's immediate passage by death from a state of probation to a state of retribution. There is no age, no day, no hour, no moment of lost life and consciousness to them who die in the Lord. The dead in Christ are with Him without an instant—a sandfall of time intervening. And, oh! what a contrast of state and circumstances came to the dying malefactor, within one short day in which paradise was promised to him by the Saviour!

What a day was that to the praying, dying penitent! In the morning he was led forth a condemned malefactor, amidst the execrations of men. In the

evening he entered paradise, welcomed by angels, and by the spirits of just men made perfect. At the noon of day he confessed Jesus, and cried for mercy and salvation, being a miserable sinner, trembling at the brink of perdition, as consciously dying upon the cross; by six o'clock he had passed the gates of the heavenly city, and appeared before the throne of the Lamb, as the richest trophy of His saving power. A few moments before he was racked with burning agony upon the cross, starting and dying with broken legs, and now he is at rest, and in blissful enjoyment for ever! And so with the Christian believer still. You draw near to him when dying, and you pity the emaciated, worn, and exhausted frame, as it sighs and sinks, with death-sweat, upon the bed. At that instant the freed, liberated spirit, rises fresh and young in yonder paradise of God. You bathe the throbbing head; you fold the fallen hand; you damp the parched lips; but, lo! while you do so, the spirit has taken its crown, is waving its palm, and is shouting its song of salvation before the throne. To the dying believer Jesus draws near, and says amidst mortal agony and exhaustion, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise'; and he finds that to be absent from the body, is to be immediately present with the Lord. Let not, then, any quibbling, unbelieving critics try to weaken this answer by a mere point in punctuation, placing the comma after 'to-day,' instead of 'thee,' to represent the Saviour as proclaiming, 'I say unto thee to-day, shalt thou—after a long interval of unconsciousness—'be with Me in paradise.' It is trifling with Divine truth thus to treat it—and worse than trifling. It is plainly against the intended mean-

ing of the answer which was to assure the penitent and humble petitioner, who dared only to ask for future remembrance, that that very day he should be with Christ in paradise; and it is contradicting inspired teaching, and wresting it from its common-sense signification, to support a false and dreamless state of unconsciousness of the soul between death and the resurrection, which the Bible knows nothing of. The promise of the Saviour was of immediate entrance into blissful repose.

See, also, the *instant promptness* of this promise. No sooner was the penitent, believing prayer offered than it was answered. Usually, a severe sufferer's thoughts are absorbed in his own case. And, now when publicly railed upon, while He bore not only the indignities of men, but also the wrath of God for a sinful world, the Lord Jesus Christ might be supposed to have concentrated all His thoughts and feelings upon Himself. But, no sooner did this poor, dying malefactor whisper, amidst shouts and revilings, his faint, plaintive prayer to Him, than He heard and answered it. He made no reply to the accusations brought against Him in the judgment hall. He surprised and perplexed Pilate by not answering again when his life was at stake. When He was reviled with mocking, scourging, smiting and spitting, in Herod's courtyard, He reviled not again. He made no remonstrance against being taken forth to execution, but was 'led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.' He gave no answer to the taunts of priests and rabble, nor to the blasphemous reproaches of the impenitent malefactor. But no sooner does the peni-

tent and contrite sinner breathe a prayer towards Him for remembrance, than He heeds and answers it; and doubtless it was with an accompanying look of compassionate love from those glazing eyes, He said instantly, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' The praying, distressed, Syrophœnician mother he held in suspense, saying, 'It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to the dogs.' To the two disciples in the way to Emmaus, He concealed His person and character for a time; but to this expiring sinner who had shown strong, trustful faith, and who had no time for suspense or delay, He promptly and immediately replied. In a moment He answered the prayer addressed to Him. Answered! Yea, He more than answered. The malefactor prayed for a thought; Christ promised him paradise. The malefactor glanced onwards to a future period when our Lord should come in His kingdom; the Saviour promised immediate companionship with Himself in heaven. The malefactor dared not to express all that he would desire—the everlasting salvation of his soul, which was ready to perish; but Jesus in His promise included all that belonged to his full salvation, pardon, renewal, sanctification—not only title to heaven, but fitness for it, and that at once, without baptism, sacramental rites, or priestly absolution. So full and sure is the salvation of Christ, however and whenever it is experienced; and the faith which brings forgiveness of sin, brings at the same moment death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness. Yea, entire meetness for heaven, even in the very chief of sinners. Let no man then despair in coming to Christ, even at the last hour, or in the deepest

extremity of his existence, if his repentance and faith be real and evangelical; for it is spoken by the Redeemer, whose word is sure even in death itself, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.

> 'Jesus, Thou art all compassion!
> Pure, unbounded love Thou art!
> Visit me with Thy salvation:
> Enter every trembling heart.'

Notice further the *confident authority* with which the dying Redeemer answered the praying malefactor, and the *full* and *solemn assurance* He gave to the contrite suppliant—'*Verily* I *say unto* thee, to-day *shalt* thou *be* with Me in paradise.' Here is no doubt of the Saviour's power to forgive sins on earth expressed, or intimated. He does not say, 'If I *should* conquer, thou shalt reign with Me; if I should triumph over sin, death and hell, and reach My Father's presence, then I will remember thee, and intercede for thee. But firmly, confidently, even in the racking agonies of death, He said, '*I* say unto thee: *I*, now suffering and dying; *I*, scorned and insulted; *I*, in whom thou hast believed with thy heart unto righteousness; *I* say unto *thee*, who art ready to perish, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise!"' Jesus knew that though He was dying, He was conquering; that though He was then treading the wine-press of Divine wrath, He would appease and satisfy it. That He was then making full atonement, satisfaction and oblation for the sin of the world. That upon that cross, where His heel was bruised by the nail, He was crushing the serpent's head. That on that cross, where his side should be pierced with the soldier's spear, He was sheathing

the awakened sword of Divine vengeance. That from that cross He would open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. And, therefore, confidently and authoritatively, the Saviour replied, '*I* say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'

Yea, our Lord prefaced and sealed this firm and positive promise with the most *solemn assurance* of truth and reliableness—'*Verily*, I say unto thee.' Of a truth it shall be so. The form of expression amounting to the attestation of an oath. As if Jesus had sworn to the dying malefactor from the cross that He should be saved, and that on that very day, from being an outcast companion of thieves, he should be the glorified friend of the Lord of heaven and earth; and from being a suffering, dying malefactor on the painful cross, he should possess and enjoy the bliss of heaven. Such assurance, we are ready to say, the self-condemned and praying penitent needed; for how unworthy and unprepared would he feel himself to be for all that was promised. From being a highway robber, publicly put to death for his depredations on the rights, property, and, perhaps, life of man, to become a pardoned renewed and sanctified believer, and that, probably, on the first prayer he offered. To be answered affirmatively and positively when, as his lips were parched, and his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth, in the approaching agonies of dissolution. To be rescued from hell at its very gates. To be snatched, literally, a brand from the burning. To be grasped by Christ as he hung, a poor, fluttering sinner, over the open mouth of the serpent, which lay curled up at the foot of the gibbet, ready to bear

away the prey to everlasting burnings, and to be received up from Golgotha, the place of skulls, into paradise, the garden of God, and there beheld as the friend of Jesus, and be for ever viewed as the the first and most signal proof of Christ's power to save unto the uttermost. All this, and more than this, is involved in the Redeemer's answer to the prayer of the dying malefactor; so that he needed, we say, the solemn and full assurance given, '*Verily*, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'

Would not that answer be fulfilled? Would the Saviour who died before the malefactor, and entered into paradise before him, be like the ungrateful butler, whose remembrance was bespoken in prison, but on exaltation to honour, forgot the man to whom he owed so much, and whom he had promised to remember? No, He who remembered the malefactor on the cross, would remember him from the throne. Nor would the believing malefactor's faith weaken or fail; for what followed would strengthen and confirm it. The solemn darkness which shrouded the heavens and the earth for three hours. The earthquake, and the rising of the dead from their long closed up and rocky graves. The loud cry of the Saviour on the cross, 'It is finished!' —when creation to her very centre shook, and rent the partition wall and overhanging veil of the temple in twain from top to bottom. All this would extort the exclamation of the centurion from the lips of the malefactor—'Truly this was the Son of God!' And as he bowed his fainting head upon his bosom, he would say confidently and assuredly, 'I shall this day be with Jesus Christ in paradise.'

May we not now say, as at the beginning, 'What an astounding miracle of saving grace and mercy have we here!' It must have astonished angels themselves, who desire so eagerly to look into the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that shall follow. If ever there was a day in which there was silence in heaven for the space of half-an-hour, we should say it was when Jesus the Son of God, whom all angels had worshipped from the beginning, was beheld yielding Himself in apparent helplessness to the agonies of death. If ever they ceased for a time from their songs and rushed from their thrones to any scene upon earth, and with drooping wings surrounded it, that must have been when the Father's face was hidden from His well beloved Son, and when He was left alone to the awful struggle with the confederated powers of darkness. But if ever there was a moment when angelic thrones were all occupied together, and all heaven was heard ringing through its many mansions with the very loudest song of praise, it must have been at the time when the spirit of the marred, scourged and crucified Redeemer broke from its mortal tenement, and passed into heaven to receive its exalted reward. And if there was one circumstance which on that day heightened the songs of the redeemed, and of the angels in heaven to the utmost, it was that He was immediately followed, not by Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel, or even the beloved John who stood by His cross, but by the pardoned, saved and sanctified malefactor, who on the morning of that day had been among the most miserable sinners upon earth, and at the very brink of everlasting perdition.

What are the more *practical lessons* we learn from this subject?

1. We learn, as in substance we have declared, that *no sinner's case is too desperate for Christ*, if he will only repent and believe the Gospel. This case proves that if only out of hell, no man is too near the scorching gulf to be beyond being snatched as a brand from the burning. Let no one with this instance on record say that there is not mercy for the chief of sinners. And let no one deny sudden, instantaneous, and full salvation, and affirm that a spiritual change is obtained by repeated efforts, and by acquired habits. This man was an outcast reprobate in the morning, and before evening he was a saved and sanctified believer. This man was on the high road to hell in the morning, and at night he was with Christ in paradise. Only let there be spiritual awakening and the fear of God; only let there be free and full confession of sin, and of its deserved punishment; only let there be prayer and supplication to Christ for remembrance, trusting in His mediation with 'faith in His blood'; then the sins which were many shall all be forgiven: and the soul that was crimson and scarlet, with deep ingrained dye of intense and concentrated corruption, shall be washed 'white as wool,' and 'white as snow,' in the blood of the Lamb. Go, then, weeping, contrite, perishing sinner; go to Christ and pray, 'Lord remember me!' And He who answered from the cross, will answer from the throne. He does remember you. He contemplated your case when He was prostrate in Gethsemane, and when He cried, 'It is finished!' on Calvary. He has graven your name upon His hands

with pointed steel, and streaming blood Divine. Yea, He has remembered thee in all thy sinfulness and danger, or thou wouldst not have been alive at this moment. He has prayed for thee, and said, 'Spare him yet a little longer!' Now pray to Him in penitence and faith. *Backslider!* He remembers thee, with the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals, and asks, 'What way of iniquity have ye found in Me, that thou hast departed from Me?' 'Return,' He cries, 'for I have redeemed thee.' Return now with penitence and faith, and thou, whether a sinner never having yet experienced salvation, or a backslider who had possessed and enjoyed it,—and verily thou shalt be saved.

2. But let no one build on this subject of Divine mercy *presumptuous hope*, and say, 'as the malefactor was saved at death and in his expiring moments, so shall I be saved at the extreme end of life.' Remember the special circumstances of this man, as named at the beginning; circumstances of the death of Christ that never will occur again. And this man may have repented and believed at the very first opportunity; for who can prove that he had seen or heard the Saviour before? How different to them who know and hear of Christ all their lives through! This man, brief as was the period, had time for repentance and faith, and had the Holy Spirit's influence and grace vouchsafed to him. You may die in a moment—in an instant—without even the opportunity of crying, 'Lord remember me!' Sudden death of senselessness, by an overflow of blood in the heart or on the brain, may leave you incapable of prayer. And if you are spared from sudden death, you do

not know that the Holy Spirit, whom you have grieved, vexed and may have quenched, will work in you real repentance, or take of the things of Christ and show them unto you. You may be then abandoned, as having been sufficiently striven with, warned and entreated to turn to the Lord. You may be judiciously hardened as was Pharaoh, smitten senseless in the midst of dangers; or left alone as Ephraim was; or departed from as Saul was. And if you do not feel this, and still think you can repent and believe at the last, where shall appear your fruits of repentance, and the sure signs of your faith? The crab tree has the same appearance as the apple tree; and when repentance is green and sour, without time to ripen, who shall say that it is genuine, and would bear fruit in its season? Do not by delay presume upon the mercy of Christ. There is but one death-bed repentance recorded in the whole Bible, and that is the one before us. There is this one, as it has been said, 'That no sinner may despair, but only this one that no one may presume.' Most men die as they have lived; and thousands who have lived in sin, die hardened in it as the reviling malefactor did, while very few become penitent and believing in their last moments. Say not, then, as the penitent malefactor was saved in death, so shall I be; but as the impenitent malefactor experienced no change in the end, no more shall I. That is the more rational conclusion; for the most tremendous probabilities are on the side of perishing in iniquity. But, let me ask, if this be your thought and purpose, to live wilfully in sin and rebellion all your lives, and then with a 'Lord remember me,' pass to holiness and heaven for ever. After feasting with

Satan all your days, do you expect to be eternally at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Is this your intention or expectation? Do you suppose that Satan will allow you to escape from him so easily at the last? What; after all his watching and temptations, and his knowledge of your weakest points of character, will he let you pass from his power by a single strained and desperate effort when heart and flesh are failing? Dream not so foolishly, either of Satan or thyself, sinner. But now, before death, and while there is time and opportunity for repentance and faith in their exercises and fruits; and while the Holy Spirit works and strives with you; cry in penitence, believing that Christ is here, able and ready to save you, 'Lord remember me!'

Christian Believer! let this be ever thy prayer—'Lord remember me.' He does remember thee in all thy afflictions, temptations, and sorrows, and He prays for thee that thy faith fail not. He remembers thee in all thy silent weeping on account of sin and trouble; and though thy tears may dry upon thy cheeks, and disappear from sight, yet He collects and treasures them up in His bottle of everlasting mercy. He remembers thee in life, and He will remember thee in death; and will whisper to thy fluttering soul, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' He will remember thee at His coming, and send forth His angels to gather His elect from the four winds of heaven. He will remember thee in judgment, and spare thee as a man spareth his own son who serveth him. He will remember thee in heaven, where thou shalt be 'ever with the Lord.' Amen. May it be so.

V.

THE LAMB OF GOD.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'
—JOHN i. 29.

IT was a memorable day for mankind when these words were first spoken! And truly memorable is the name of him who uttered them! All Christians render the tribute of grateful veneration to the first Gospel preacher. The Saviour Himself pronounced one of the highest eulogiums upon him, and emphatically declared, 'Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist.' And, yet, as you know, many great men had preceded him, who deservedly stood high in the estimation both of God and of man. *Enoch,* for instance, was born before him, and was great as the antediluvian prophet, who in a universally corrupt and violently wicked period, it is recorded, walked so closely with God on the confines of the spiritual world that he was peacefully drawn into it, and that without dying—'he was not, for God took him.' *Noah,* 'the preacher of righteousness,' was great as preserved in the ark amidst the universal deluge, and ever will be viewed as great; for he unites, as by a narrow isthmus, a world of human beings who lived before him, and a world which lived after him. *Abraham,* the believing patriarch, was great as the father of the chosen race of Israel, as the progenitor

of Christ after the flesh, and as the selected pattern for faith and obedience to all succeeding generations of mankind. He was great in his own day, and he is great to our view when we look back upon him at this extended distance of time. *Moses*, the Jewish lawgiver, was great, and 'spake to God face to face,' while amidst awful thunder, and smoking lightning, he received the tables of the moral law, and ceremonial precepts, from the hands and mouth of Jehovah. *Elijah*, the prophet of Horeb, was great. He brought fire and rain from heaven, and raised the dead by prayer, and he was visibly borne to heaven in a chariot, and by horses of celestial flame. *David*, the king of Israel, the 'sweet singer of Israel,' and 'the man after God's own heart,' was great, and is still great, as being in the direct line of the Messiah, and as the inspired leader of the choir of all saints throughout all time. *Solomon* was great for wisdom and earthly grandeur, and his name will be proverbial for greatness to the end of the world. And *Isaiah*, and *Ezekiel*, and *Daniel*, and other prophetic bards of Judah, were great by their grand and solemn utterances on the coming Deliverer of all nations from the condemnation and thraldom of sin.

But how far did the *Baptist* surpass all these in real greatness, so as to sustain for him the high eulogium pronounced upon him by our Lord! He was not called like Enoch to prophecy of judgment to come, but of mercy and peace by the advent of a Saviour. He was not left like Abraham to see the day of Christ afar off, but to announce its immediate dawn. He had not like Moses to institute typical rites and ceremonies in sacrifices of bulls and of goats, but

to direct attention to the victim itself in which those 'shadows of good things to come' found their reality and fulfilment. It is true that he was not endowed with miraculous power like the prophet of Carmel. He was the humble sojourner in the desert—was clad in a rough garment of camel's hair—and his meat was locusts and wild honey. And yet with all this poverty and severity of life, he was the true Elias, prefigured by him who bore that name, and was expressly sent to 'prepare the way of the Lord before Him.' He was designedly the uniting link of the old and new dispensations—the last prophet of the one, and the first preacher of the other. 'For the law and the prophets were until John; since that time, the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it.' He had not, like David and Isaiah and Daniel, and others of the inspired bards of Judah, to speak of a Messiah who should be cut off when seventy prophetic weeks should be accomplished; but he had to proclaim the veritable presence of the greater one than Solomon: standing in the midst of his gathered countrymen, and with outstretched finger towards the face and features of the Divine Redeemer, so full of benignity and love, to cry, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'

The office of the first Gospel preacher is this evening to be sustained here by the most unworthy of his successors. To that precious and 'unspeakable gift' to which John the Baptist directed his repentant hearers, I am commissioned by the word of life, and selected by the mercy of God, to direct you. Behold then, with eyes of devout attention, and hearts of glowing gratitude, the *divinely chosen and appointed*

sin offering for all mankind, 'The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' *First,* we will contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ in the *character* presented to us by the Baptist; and *then* we will consider *the dispositions and feelings* with which we are to regard Him.

And at once we observe, it was in His *sacrificial* character that Jesus Christ was set forth by John when declared to be 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' It was as the divinely selected victim to suffer and to die a sin offering for mankind that He was thus designated; and it was in this sense that it would be understood by Jewish people accustomed to scenes of the sacrifice of lambs, and to whom these words were originally addressed. It has been supposed, and not without reason, that the image or appellation here employed was taken from the actual appearance of lambs at Bethabara, the ford or passage of the Jordan where John was baptizing, and where lambs for sacrifice in the temple were frequently in large numbers brought over the river from the mountain pastures beyond. If so, it was not only a natural but also a significant association of ideas. It was as if the Baptist had said, 'Here before you are the lambs being brought over Jordan for sin offerings in the temple; but here in the midst of you is the divinely selected victim, the true sin offering, in whom all legal sacrifices have their reality and fulfilment; "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."' If this were not the suggestive circumstance of the appellation employed, there can be no doubt of the sacrificial character intended by it, for the lamb was the animal most devoted to sacrifice

among the Jews; and from the beginning, more than any other creature, had been the representative victim of the altar. A lamb—the firstling of the flock—constituted Abel's better, fuller and acceptable sacrifice. Among the patriarchs the lamb was the familiar offering upon the altar: hence said Isaac to his father, Abraham, 'Here are the fire and the wood: where is the *lamb* for a burnt offering?' By the Jews lambs were most frequently offered in sacrifice. Two lambs were offered daily, at the morning and evening sacrifices, for 'a continual burnt offering.' Two additional lambs were offered on each Sabbath as a weekly sacrifice. Seven lambs were offered at each new moon as a monthly sacrifice. Sixteen lambs were offered at the Feast of Pentecost; fourteen lambs were offered at the Feast of Trumpets; while the Feast of the Passover, commemorative of the deliverance of Egypt, when the blood of lambs was sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintels, and which, in one sense, was the basis of all Levitical sacrifices, was especially celebrated with the sacrifice of lambs. So that, more than any other creature, the lamb was the representative of sacrifice to the Jews; and when John the Baptist designated Jesus Christ 'the Lamb of God,' it was to set him forth as the intended antitype of Levitical and figurative sacrifices for sin; as the *real* atoning sin offering appointed and accepted by God for mankind. As the son of a priest—as a Nazarite brought up and educated amidst sacrificial scenes—the idea of sacrifice was natural to John; and, undoubtedly, he meant to express this idea, when he employed the language of the text.

This *sacrificial* character of Christ is maintained

fully by Scripture teaching, both in the Old Testament and in the New. The psalmist testified of this when, as speaking by inspiration from the lips of the Messiah, he said, 'Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not: a body hast Thou prepared me.' These words, as you know, are applied to Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews by Divine authority. Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, whose special office it was to proclaim the character of the Messiah, says of Him 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,' and declares that 'His soul should be made an offering for sin.' In the language of Daniel, 'Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself,' and to cause the sacrifice and oblation among the Jews to cease. And it is a remarkable fact, that after the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross, the offering of Jewish sacrifices, in their prescribed order and authority, did cease. The destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and the consequent loss of Levitical genealogies for the family of Aaron, have placed it beyond the power of man to offer sacrifice according to the law. 'Verily, He taketh away the first that He may establish the second.'

Thus to Christ, in His sacrificial character, gave all the prophets witness. Our Lord claimed this sacrificial character for Himself. He spake of His body as *given* for His disciples, and His blood as *shed* for them; and He declared, 'I lay down My life for My sheep.' The apostles, personally instructed by their Divine Master, proclaim the same truth. St. Peter declares, 'Ye are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.' St. John, who heard and realised the announcement by

the Baptist, affirms that Christ 'is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' And, as if specially impressed with the appellation, employs it more than thirty times in the book of Revelation, and thus makes the lamb the lasting symbol of a sacrificial Redeemer. Thus you have in his writings, the Lamb in the midst of the throne; the Lamb as it had been slain, with the marks of the sacrificial knife fresh upon it; the Lamb leading His people to fountains of living water, and the Lamb worshipped and adored by men and angels. The inspired writings of the Apostle Paul are full of this truth. 'Christ hath loved us,' he says, 'and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice for a sweet smelling savour.' He speaks of His *one sacrifice* —of His being *once offered*—of *putting away* sin by the the *sacrifice of Himself*—of His *offering Himself* without spot to God—and declares, emphatically, that 'Christ is our passover, *sacrificed* for us.'

A *sacrifice* is the infliction of death on a living creature upon an altar, by slaughter, so that its blood is there poured forth to God. And Jesus Christ poured out His soul, or life, unto death. He was slain upon the altar of the cross, to redeem and save mankind. Hence it is that such prominence, and special emphasis, is given in Scripture phraseology to the *blood* of Christ. It is declared to be '*precious blood.*' It is set forth as declaring 'better things than the blood of Abel'; as 'the blood of the Son of God,' by which the Church has been purchased. We are said to be 'justified through His blood.' 'His blood cleanses us from all sin'; and being superior to the blood of bulls and of goats, 'purges our consciences

from dead works to serve the living God.' And in the book of Revelation of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial character is scrupulously maintained. He is therein expressly designated 'the Lamb,' as we have just reminded you. And, in the celebration of His final triumph, when He is seen riding forth amidst the rejoicing hosts of heaven, with many crowns upon His head, as King of kings and Lord of lords, He is 'clothed in a vesture dipped in blood.' With this uniform teaching of Scripture in both its Testaments; with corroborative testimony of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and of Christ Himself; with the declared figurative character of Jewish sacrifices, and with the confirmatory evidence of heaven and earth for this truth, who can doubt that when John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus Christ to be 'the Lamb of God,' he intended and was understood to set Him forth in His *sacrificial* character—as the meek and innocent One who should be slain as the divinely appointed victim on behalf of mankind?

Indeed, the latter clause of the text explains this to be the meaning of the apellation employed, and expressly declares Him to be the *substitutionary and aioning sacrifice for sinners.* He is 'the Lamb of God, which *taketh away* the sin of the world.' He lifts up from mankind the accumulated weight of guilt and condemnation, and taking upon Himself the punishment due for all their crimes, He bears it away from them, by suffering in their place and stead. 'Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.' 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.' 'The

Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all.' For the transgression of my people was He smitten. He bare the sin of many. He was delivered for our offences: Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. What can be more assuring of the vicarious character of the Saviour's sacrifice than these Divine declarations?—which might, as you know, be multiplied in quotation to any extent. He in His own person, takes upon Him the legal answerableness to Divine justice of the world of sinners, and by suffering and dying in their stead, bears the punishment due for their offences, and so *takes it away* from them. As the scapegoat, over whose head were confessed the sins of the people, and which was then driven into the desert, so the Lord Jesus Christ, about to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness, bore upon Himself the sins of mankind, and took them away.

And this substitutionary suffering and sacrifice is for *all the human race*. It is for the whole world of transgressors; and that from the beginning to the end of time. It is not for the Jews only, but for the Gentiles also. It is not for mankind of one period, or of one region. It is for mankind of all periods, and of all regions. It is not for a select number of human beings elected to eternal life, while the remainder are reprobated to everlasting death, or left to perish by their own depraved helplessness. It is for all our sinful race, who *have* lived, who *now* live, or who *shall* live. It is for *transgressors*, however numerous they may be; for the unjust, wherever they have their being. The remedy provided is equal in sufficiency and extent to the disease, which is universal. The

salvation brought by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is equal in its provision to the consequences of the fall through the first Adam, as St. Paul teaches in the 5th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. It is the whole world which God has so loved as to give for it His only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The feast of salvation is prepared for all nations. The Gospel supper is for all that will partake of it. The redemption which is in Christ Jesus is for all the human race. He gave Himself a ransom for *all.* And that *all* necessarily includes *every* individual human being; just as the whole of necessity includes all the parts belonging to it. He tasted death for *every* man. Not one of all the descendants of Adam downwards to the end of time was excluded from consideration in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, the Son of God, when He died upon the cross. He gathered in Himself all the penalty of sin due to mankind from the first transgressor to the last of his posterity, and in His associated Divine and human natures bore it away, in all its vast, accumulated load; not by piecemeal, or by separated portions, but once for all, in the mighty mountain mass of collected enormity and huge aggregate—even *the sin of the world.* How intense the innate depravity of this sin! How dark and foul its ingratitude! How multiplied its combined rebellions! And how Alpine in height, depth and breadth the enormous sum of all human offences from the beginning to the end of time! But He, the substitutionary sacrifice, takes it all away.

The *Lamb of God* does this. The pure, innocent, spotless, unblemished being. The meek, patient, sub-

missive sufferer. The Lamb of God's own *providing*. The Lamb that had lain in the Father's bosom from all eternity. The Lamb which God the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world. The Lamb which He set forth to be a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. The Lamb for which a body was prepared, on which death might be inflicted. O no! it was not, as represented by some, to appease fierce, flaming, implacable wrath, that Christ came in the flesh and suffered and died. The very first thought of man's redemption arose in the heart of God the Father. He it was that devised the means for it, and provided the lamb for the sacrifice. 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' 'God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.' To bear away the penalty due to human transgression, 'He spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all.' Jesus Christ voluntarily came into the world of transgressors to suffer and die in their stead; but it was to do the will of the Father, as He Himself declared. It is the *Lamb of God*, the pure, meek, patient, suffering, sacrificial victim which He has provided.

What the spotless, submissive Lamb of God endured in bearing our iniquities, is not for mortals to conceive. There is a sacredness in the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ which forbids intrusion of thought upon them in their intensity and extent. And they must ever be left shrouded in the midnight darkness of Gethsemane, and in the midday blackness of the sun's exclusion from the sixth to the ninth hour of

the Redeemer's extreme agony upon the cross. What a pure and perfect body in full development of prime manhood could endure, no person could say. A child has not strength to suffer as full grown man can suffer. Nor has unfolding youth or decrepid age. But human life in full maturity of thirty-three years, as was that of the Saviour, to suffer a violent and protracted death, must experience thereby the heaviest shock that nature can endure. But it was not physical or bodily suffering wholly or mainly that Jesus, the Lamb of God, bore for mankind, to take away their sins. It was the suffering of the *soul*, which was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death' before any hand of violence from man came upon Him. His soul with its griefs, fears, sympathies and susceptibility of feeling was sorrowful—full of sorrow, even to the brink of extinction. His pure, holy soul, with its view of sin in all its heinousness and desert. With what horror a true saint shrinks from sin when it appears before him! What grief such experiences when it is seen in his own family! But to have the burden of the sin of the whole world laid upon Him, the innocent and Divine victim, who shall say what was experienced in this? To bear the full weight of penalty for all human sin, smitten and afflicted not only by man, but by God. Pierced, not only by nails in the hands and feet, but with the awakened sword of Divine justice to the utmost depths of the soul! To be bruised, not only by scourgers and human executioners, but by His own Father, in the smitings of Almighty wrath. To be forsaken, not only by disciples, but to be forsaken by God, and left without a gleam of the Father's countenance, which before

had ever shone upon Him in all its fullest radiance to hang a bleeding, atoning victim on the altar of the cross, and to tread the wine press alone. And, when thus crucified, pierced, bruised, smitten, crushed in body and soul, to bear upon Himself the sin of the *whole world!* The sin of the wicked and corrupt antediluvians. The sin of the dispersed and rebellious Jews. The sin of the idolatrous and profligate Gentiles. The sin of apostate, God dishonouring Christians. O! the vast and mighty load of sin in all this. What is the sin of London in one day and night? What is the sin of England in that period? What is the sin of all cities—of all countries and of all kingdoms in one year? What the sin of the world during one turn upon its axis? or during its yearly course round the sun? But the sin of all the world, in all time from the beginning to the end of it! Who can calculate the mighty sum of all this? Who can bear the entire penalty due for it? Not man alone, however strong and mature in life he may be. None but an incarnate God can do this. We pry not into the nature of the atonement. We do not speculate upon what has been presumptuously spoken of as 'The Philosophy of the Atonement.' Rather with the apostle St. Paul we cast our own wisdom behind us, and bowing down to worship before this declared mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, we exclaim as we contemplate it, 'O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!' But great and impenetrable as is this mystery, we have no doubt of its *meaning* and *efficiency*. The sacrifice for sin upon the cross is *expiatory*. It puts away sin. It satisfies all the claims of infinite justice.

It is *atoning*. It renders to God all that is due; and it provides for man all that is required. It is a sacrifice for sin accepted as well as provided by the Father. It is 'an offering and a sacrifice of sweet smelling savour.' So that this is the Lamb of God not only as His own gift, but also as His by acceptance. It has been received up into heaven itself as the Lamb that was slain, and which has redeemed man to God by His blood. It is the sacrificial victim which removes all the penalty and consequences of sin from man both in time and in eternity. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead; the coming of the Holy Ghost, and the salvation of ten thousand times ten thousand of thousands of thousands, a multitude which no man can number, attests and demonstrates that Jesus is 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'

II. This being the undoubted character of Christ, the Son of the God, as set forth by the Baptist, let us proceed to consider what are the *feelings and dispositions* with which we are to regard Him. 'Behold,' said this primitive herald and proclaimer of the Saviour —'*Behold* the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!'

1. Need I say that *fixed and earnest attention* to the object set forth was claimed by John when he uttered this exclamation? He had previously spoken of Jesus in His surpassing dignity and personal superiority—declaring that while coming in time and appearance after him, He, Jesus, was preferred before him, and that he was not worthy to stoop down as a slave at the feet of his Lord, and unloose the latchet of Christ's shoes. The next day, seeing Jesus coming to him, he exclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which

taketh away the sin of the world!' Then he proceeded to declare at length, and in detail, how the Divine character of Jesus, the Son of God, had been attested to his sight and in his hearing, when as he was baptizing Christ he saw the heavens opened, saw the Spirit descend as a dove and light upon Him, and heard a voice proclaim, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' And then, also, on the next day following, when standing with two of his disciples, he saw Jesus walking, he exclaimed again, '*Behold* the Lamb of God!' So that it is evident that the Baptist by this repeated exclamation sought to fix deep and earnest attention on the Saviour in His lamb-like, sacrificial character. '*Behold!*' See, with admiration, wonder, and amazement, who that is now before you, 'The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'

And is there, I ask confidently, any being or object in the universe so worthy of attention as the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there any one so morally lovely and attractive? So pure, meek, patient, and so submissive to indignities and suffering as He? I have no doubt that these lamb-like qualities were depicted in the very countenance of Jesus, so as to impress the beholder by their attractive and subduing power. No authentic description of our Lord's personal appearance has come down to us, but as the 'Son of Man' his inward character would be imprinted on his countenance. If anger, profligacy and revenge imprint themselves upon the human face and features, why should not charity, goodness, meekness and love appear there? Doubtless, there were serenity and repose in the face and features of Jesus Christ, expres-

sive of the moral and spiritual qualities within. And then with divinity enshrined in humanity, as declared by John, how surpassingly attractive and worthy of wonder and admiration! How natural and reasonable to set forth to disciples and to the multitude as an object of reverential wonder and adoration!

And, brethren, is there any being or object to be named which so powerfully claims our admiration and worship as does Jesus, the Son of God, incarnate in human flesh? Where is unspotted purity, unruffled meekness, enduring patience, condescending self-sacrificing love equal to what you find in Him? Satan with all his malignant searching could find no evil in Him. Pilate, the unrighteous governor, who pronounced upon Him the sentence of condemnation to death, openly declared he found no fault in Him. Judas, the base traitor, affirmed that he had betrayed innocent blood. He was the Lamb without blemish and without spot. He had no resentment: when He was reviled, He reviled not again. He gave His back to the smiters, and His face to them that plucked off the hair. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. All moral qualities gather and centre in Him. His name is truly 'wonderful!' He is the very focus and source of life and glory. He is the angel standing in the midst of the sun. Come, bow down and worship before Him. Gaze upon Him with joyful adoration. They do so in heaven, where He is seen in the midst of the throne as the Lamb that was slain. There angels and redeemed men serve Him day and night in His temple. There the censers of worship smoke in His presence, and unceasing

anthems ring with His name. Then it is safe and becoming for mortals to worship and adore Him. *Behold* Him. Fix the earnest and worshipping gaze of your soul upon Him. He is the chief among ten thousand—fairer than any of the sons of men, and altogether lovely. '*Behold* the Lamb of God.'

2. But it was not simply astonished heed and adoring admiration that John claimed for Christ from his audience when he uttered the exclamation of the text; he also required from those whom he called upon to behold Him *trust and confidence in Him for salvation.* It was not only in His meekness, lowliness and love that they were to look upon Him, but also in His sacrificial and atoning character, as the Saviour of sinners: as taking away the sin of the world. Conviction for sin had been produced by the preaching of this greatest of all prophets. As the voice of one crying in the wilderness he had called the Jews to repent: and at his loud, stern, faithful call multitudes had come forth from Judæa and the regions round about, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. He had baptized them confessedly unto repentance, declaring that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. And now with the Divine Saviour standing in the midst of them—the true Messiah—the Almighty deliverer—the appointed antitype of all Levitical sacrifices, he exclaimed for personal trust and reliance upon Him alone, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' Trust not in me, nor in my baptism to repentance. Rely upon Him, the true and efficient Saviour.

And it is upon Jesus Christ, the Divine and Almighty Saviour of the world, that we are called

personally to rely for salvation. He by suffering and death takes away your sin. All your sin. The sin of all your life; your sin of childhood; sin of youth, and sin of riper years. Your sin of innate depravity; your sin of base ingratitude; your sin of unnatural rebellion; your accumulated sin of falsehood, pride, unbelief, covetousness and wickedness of every character and kind. He bore it all in His own body on the tree, and He bore it away from thee, so that thou needest not suffer and die for it.

> 'See all your sins on Jesus laid:
> The Lamb of God was slain,
> His soul was once an offering made
> For every soul of man.'

Come, penitent sinner, lift thy tearful eye to this sacrificial victim. Come to this altar! The sacrifice is stretched upon it. The blood of atonement is poured forth. The smoke of the accepted offering now ascends with sweet smelling savour. Behold it! Look believingly upon it. Say as you do so, 'Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*.' All may look to Jesus for salvation however far off or distant from Him they may be; for 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so has the Son of Man been lifted up, that *whosoever* believeth in Him might not perish but have eternal life.' Look sinner, bitten, diseased, dying as thou art even in the extremity of the camp; for He who hangs upon the cross and dies for sinners, cries, 'Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God and there is none else beside me.' Draw near, approach the Saviour. There are no barriers around His cross. The avenues to it are all widely open. He that will come may

come. The sacrificial work is all done. The atonement is finished. There needs no human priest. No sacrifice of the mass. No self-inflicted tortures; no crawling grievance; no weary pilgrimage. *Once* in the end of the world He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. There remains no more sacrifice for sin. This is sufficient. And we are here not to sacrifice as priests, but to minister as servants. We are here as heralds—as the voice to cry, to preach, to proclaim—like the Baptist. With him we are gratefully content to direct others to the Saviour. To stand and point by the hand to Him. This we would do as long as we live, and

> 'Happy if with my latest breath,
> I may but gasp His name;
> Preach Him to all, and cry in death,
> Behold! Behold the Lamb.'

Sinner! look to Him now and live. Look on Him whom thou hast pierced, and mourn. But with eyes brimful of tears; look to Him as a present and an all-sufficient Saviour. Behold Him with penitence and faith. All who have done so have been saved. Mary Magdalene beheld Him and went in peace to sin no more. The dying malefactor beheld Him in the darkest hour of His existence, and bespoke His remembrance to hear Him reply, 'Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise.' His very murderers beheld Him, pricked in their hearts with sharp, piercing conviction that they had crucified the Lord of life and glory, and they were added to the Church and saved. And thousands of all ranks, and ages, and countries, and peoples, and tongues, have obtained salvation from the Lamb, and now follow

Him in white robes wheresoever He goeth, and will ascribe their salvation to Him for ever and ever. Then, sinner, look now to Him. Behold Him as *thy* Saviour. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'

Believers in Jesus, the Lamb of God, still look to Him. Behold Him, not once for all, but with the continued, steady gaze of unswerving perseverance. Behold Him for *inward cleansing,* as well as for deliverance from guilt and condemnation. 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin'—from its last stain; from every spot of defilement. And it not only cleanses but keeps the believer pure, moment by moment, and instant by instant, if we only keep ourselves sprinkled from an evil conscience. Then look steadily and continually to Jesus. Behold Him as long as you live. Look to Him in every day, in every hour, and in every moment of your probationary existence. And when life on earth shall terminate, and death shall draw its darkening film over your eyes, and close their sight against all earthly objects, inwardly, spiritually, within your soul, 'Behold the Lamb of God'; and washed and sanctified by His blood, you shall pass into His immediate presence, where 'thine eyes, freed from all tears, shall see the King in His beauty, and the land which is very far off.' Amen!

VI.

DAVID'S THIRST FOR THE LIVING GOD.

'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?'

PSALM xlii. 1, 2.

A MAN deprived of his possessions and driven into exile, in giving utterance to the grief of his heart through the reverses and deprivations experienced, would be sure to lament most loudly the loss of what he had most highly valued and enjoyed. So that it would be safe to infer the character and former pursuit of the man in exile, from the subject of his most sorrowful lamentation. For instance, the man of learning and science would lament most deeply the loss of his books, his scientific instruments, and literary associates. The patriot would lament most emphatically his separation from his own country and people. The man of social affection and companionship would regret most pathetically his loss of home, family and friends. While the warrior would speak most feelingly of disassociation from fellow comrades in battle, and from his country's prowess and renown; and the man of worldly pleasure would lament the loss of opportunities for dissipation and revelry.

Now apply this principle and test of character and pursuit to *David*, the writer of this psalm, and you will not fail to see at once that he was pre-eminently godly, and in truth 'the man after God's own heart.'

At the time when he composed this sorrowful and pathetic ode, he was a wandering and persecuted exile, in a hard and barren land beyond the boundary of his own country, where he, the minstrel king of Israel, had been through many years the lauded idol of his own people. Absalom, his unnatural and treacherous son, had drawn off from him the hearts of his subjects, and had marshalled them in rebellion against him so extensively that he had suddenly to flee barefooted and bare-headed over the Mount of Olives, by the wilderness beyond Jordan, and there to wander in exile, deserted and friendless, having lost all that he possessed and prized. And now, in this his reversed and destitute condition, what is the loss he sorrowfully laments? He was a man of refined literary culture, and of scientific contemplation of the heavens and the moon and the stars. He was a devoted patriot, and an ardent lover of his country and nation. He was a man of strong social affection, most tenderly attached to his family and friends. And he was a valiant man, who had pursued warfare from his youth up. What now in lonely, wandering exile is that to which his quick and sensitive soul turns with most vehement longing? Is it to literary pursuits; to his palace or throne; to his family; to his military exploits and regal splendours? No; none of these was the main object of his brooding thoughts and most sorrowful lamentations. It was the loss of religious means and ordinances in the sanctuary, and of public communion with God that he deplored. This loss with him absorbed all other considerations, and aroused within him the strongest and most vehement desires for the recovery of what he had lost, so that in

the language of apt poetical similitude he exclaims, 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?' Let the ardent exclamation of the exiled king of Israel speak to us from his rocky and savage retreat beyond Jordan, of the estimate to be made of public communion with the Most High in His sanctuary; observing from it, First, The paramount and supreme object of King David's desire; and, Secondly, The vehement ardour and irrepressible fervency of that desire.

I. We have for contemplation, *the object of David's* paramount and strongest desire. This was '*God*,' 'the living God,' as he declares. And, this, as already observed, marks the pre-eminent godliness of his character. But what, we ask, is the meaning included in this language, which is, doubtless, specific in its signification?

1. And, first we may safely remark that it is expressive of the psalmist's desire for the *realisation of the personal presence of God.* It was for 'God,' for 'the living God,' that his soul panted and cried out. It was not to be satisfied with a cold, vague abstraction; a mere ideal; a mysterious essence; a shadowy principle pervading all nature, such as day-dreaming pantheists speak of; but the positive, veritable, really existing God Himself—'God,' 'the living God,' personally approached and realised. Not a god ethereal; a god diffused abroad in entire nature, oversouling the universe in the heavens, the earth, and the seas; a god everywhere spread abroad in essence and being, but nowhere personally realised

and felt. This, the god of modern pantheists and scientific infidels, is not the God of the Bible, and of the prophets and saints of successive dispensations. Theirs was the real, veritable, living God, and not a philosophical or scientific abstraction. It was not 'nature,' but nature's God Himself that they worshipped and served, and that they felt and experienced. It was 'God,' 'the living God,' with whom Enoch walked; to whom Abraham spake and pleaded, and with whom Jacob wrestled. 'I know my Redeemer, the living One,' exclaimed Job, in all his desertions and sufferings. It was with God, the living God, that Moses spake face to face, and to whom he addressed the pleading supplication, 'I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory!' It was the voice of God, the living God, that spoke to Elijah in the still, small voice. It was the living Son of God that the apostles beheld and companioned with. 'It is I,' said Jesus to the affrighted disciples, who on the sea of Galilee took him for a ghost or phantom. 'It is I,' really Myself; 'be not afraid!' 'See and handle me,' said He to them in the upper room in Jerusalem, when He appeared among them after His resurrection; 'a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.' 'I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, . . and have the keys of hell and of death,' proclaimed the glorified Redeemer, in His revelation to John at Patmos. 'God,' 'the living God,' is the God of the Bible, both in the Old Testament and the New. And this was the God of David, whose veritable and personal presence he ardently desired to realise, when he employed the language of the text.

And, brethren, this must be in all our acts and

services of worship our supreme object of desire, *to realise and feel the personal presence of God.* No mere intellectual appreciation of the presence of God must suffice, arguing, since God is everywhere, He is assuredly here. Or, 'He has promised to be in the place where His name is recorded, and, therefore, He is here.' In all acts and exercises within the sanctuary, we must feel after God, if happily we may find Him. Nor must the architectural structure of the building, the order of service, the harmony of singing, or the manner and style of preaching, keep us from God Himself. They are to bring us to God, and not to hinder or detain us in our approach to Him. The inquiry ought not to be, When shall I appear with the congregation? what shall be the service of song? what shall be the form and order of prayer? what shall be the construction and delivery of the sermon? but, 'When shall I come, and appear before Thee?' It is related of praying Bradford, of the noble army of martyrs, that it was a principle with him when he began to pray, not to cease until he felt the presence of God with him. Good John Welsh, of Scotland, was accustomed to arise from his bed in the night, and wrapping his plaid around him in the winter's cold, he prayed on until he felt the presence of the living God to be in the hut or room with him. Of Jacob of old it is recorded, 'And the Lord blessed him *there*—' on the very spot where he wrestled and pleaded, he was consciously and signally blessed. And though the season may be unpropitious, and the circumstances dark and discouraging, still in all discouragements, pursue your object of realising the presence of God, and say even against remonstrance, 'I will

not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' If we are to be blessed and saved as were the saints and servants of God in former times, we must recognise and exercise the principle of faith in a personal, living God, present with us. We must not vaguely spread out our thoughts over the expanded machinery of the universe in its daily working and processes, and talk of the laws of nature, the order of providence, and the reign of law, until the presence of the living God is lost sight of and forgotten. The fact of 'God, the living God,' with us will, if remembered, stay and quieten the soul in its stormiest periods. 'My father is at the helm,' exclaimed the confiding boy, amidst the affrighted passengers, when continuing his play, though the storm raged furiously. 'Mother, is God dead?' asked the fatherless girl, who saw her widowed mother weeping, who had previously spoken to her of the unfailing and all-sufficient goodness of God to His people. God is the living God, personally revealing Himself to His servants, as He does not unto the world; and to realise His presence should be the thirsting desire of our souls.

2. Further, the language of the psalmist denotes that his ardent desire was for *the manifestation of Divine favour and love towards him.* This is evident from what follows in the psalm itself. In the fifth verse he speaks of the 'help of God's countenance'; in the eighth verse, of 'God commanding his loving-kindness'; and in other portions he speaks of his soul being cast down within him, to be revived and comforted by 'the health of God's countenance.' Indeed, the whole spirit and structure of the psalm points to this, and shows that the psalmist desired, above all

things, manifestations to him of Divine favour and love. David knew philosophically, as well as any sceptical reasoner of the present day knows, that God was everywhere; in the rocky wilds of Gilead, beyond Jordan, as well as in the fields and vineyards on the heights of Zion by Jerusalem. He knew theologically, as well as any schooled theologian of modern times knows, that God is an infinite spirit, not bounded nor confined by any country or place. But he desired to feel that the Divine smile was over him, and that the light of God's countenance shone upon him when he was away from the sanctuary, and when he was forsaken and insulted of men. It was as if he had said, 'Lord, I am here in this heated, barren, unsheltered land, an exile and an outcast, deprived of what I possessed and enjoyed in Judæa and Jerusalem. I have been treacherously forsaken and maliciously pursued beyond the bounds of my country, so that I am here like the chased and wounded deer, pierced still more and more by daily reproaches of enemies, who tauntingly inquire of me, "Where is thy God?" But deprived, forsaken, pursued and persecuted as I am by men, let me feel Thy presence! Let the light of Thy countenance be lifted upon me; and Thy favour, which is better than life, shall cheer, revive and strengthen me. This is the help of Thy countenance which I need and seek. This is the inward spiritual help I require; and this I most ardently desire and seek.' And need I say to you that the help of God's countenance shining upon us, and assuring us that we are His, gives health and life to the soul, so as to strengthen and sustain it in all reverses and losses, however extensive and severe; so that when deprived

of all external possessions, the accepted servant and child of the Most High can joyously proclaim, 'Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.'

3. Still further, the words of the psalmist expressed his strong desire for *communion with God.* It was not only for the realisation of the Divine presence, that might be with awe and terror, making the rocky wilds dreadful to him. It was not only for manifestations of Divine favour and love, reviving and strengthening as they would be to his downcast soul; but it was for full and open communion with God amidst worshipping Israel. Hence, he asks in the text, 'When shall I come and appear before Thee, O God?' When shall I be present at Thy seat, and within Thy sanctuary? And in the fourth verse of this psalm, he adds, 'When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.' And in the sixty-third psalm, also a song of his exile, and similar in its structure and imagery to this, he says, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary.' So that it becomes evident that it was not only a sense of the Divine presence, and the smile of the Divine favour which he desired,

but, also, public communion with God in His sanctuary, and with His worshippers. He remembered the glad and joyous scenes of holyday services on Zion. He called to mind the religious fervour of united worship, where there were not only the singers accompanied by instrumental music, and where eye spoke to eye, heart to heart, voice to voice, until religious service rose to utmost strength and fervour; and where the Divine glory filled the place, and made it radiant with Divine manifestations. Amidst these scenes he had stood, knelt and worshipped. In them he had openly communed with God, and delighted himself in the Lord. But now he was where there was no sanctuary; no singers and players on instruments; no tribes going up to worship; no cloud of the Divine glory appearing in token of accepted sacrifice and service; and no high priest in purple robe, and golden girdle, and jewelled breastplate, coming forth to bless. And though he was hidden and sheltered amidst thick foliage by the swellings of Jordan, yet destitute of the place and means of public worship, it was to him spiritually a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, and in it his soul longs and thirsts for public communion with 'God,—the living God.'

David was at this time in one of the grandest of 'nature's cathedrals,' as pantheists would express it. The rocks and trees were in the place of walls and arches. The flat outspread sand of rich colour glowed and gleamed as a jewelled pavement. The fragrance of foliage and flowers by the Jordan rose as perfumed incense. The eastern azure sky bent over the whole with its calmly solemn dome, while the rolling waters below and the songbirds above combined

their musical sounds to accompany and help devotion. And, in an external sense, all in that goodly land by the river Jordan, would be to David the poet beauty and grandeur. But this was not sufficient for David, the saint and servant of God. There was the tabernacle on Zion. There was the holy place within it, where God had promised to meet with Israel, and to commune with His people. There were the outstretched wings of the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat. There was the Shekinah, the Divine glory, beaming forth from within the veil. There was the reading of the Divine law, in which the psalmist had deep delight, and which he loved so ardently. There was choral and responsive singing, and the full glow and fervour of united public worship. God's way of grace and salvation was in the sanctuary, more than in rocks, rivers, trees and plains. His glory was manifested there, more than in historic records and scientific discoveries: the glory, not only of His wisdom and power, but, also, of His goodness and love. There, in the sanctuary, were manifestations of Divine favour to the souls of God's servants, and communings of reciprocal affection and delight; and for these the psalmist longed in his inmost nature, envying the very swallow that had built its nest under the roof of God's house, and eagerly inquiring, 'When shall I come and appear before Thee?'

And, brethren, there are *advantages in public worship,* over what can be realised in private and social service, which the spiritually minded know how to appreciate and seek. Private prayer; family worship; reading the Scriptures and books of religious

literature; meditation and singing at home, are good and profitable in their appointed places. But these can never supply the help of God's countenance, and the sight of God's glory, as found in the sanctuary. Ungodly persons, half-hearted Christians, and half-day worshippers may not be ready to assent to this, and may be ready to speak of books at home as better than sermons away from it; and of private meditation as better than public prayer and praise. But public worship is a Divine institution, and preaching the Gospel is expressly commanded by Christ, with the promise of His presence to attend it; and these can never be superseded or improved by human authority. There is a glow, a fervour, a sympathetic and inspiring thrill in public worship not felt and experienced elsewhere. And there are views of God's character and perfections such as Asaph found to subdue all his disquieting doubts and fears, and to lift up his soul to the very highest aspirations for God as his supreme possession; and which David here describes as the 'glory' of the Lord, the very lustre and brightness of the Divine character, as he had seen it in the sanctuary. This the Jewish captives of Babylon felt when 'they who carried them away captive required of them a song, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"' replied the captive Israelites. Do they suppose that we have forgotten our temple worship at Jerusalem? and that we can sing here in scattered bondage as we did there in congregation? 'If I forget Thee let my right hand forget her cunning: let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I make not Jerusalem my chief joy.' Emi-

grants and settlers in newly found lands know this in log cabins and scattered huts, far off in the wilderness from Christian sanctuaries. And aged and afflicted Christians have realised it in retirement and seclusion, though in their case, when God Himself detains them at home, He will visit and bless them as He does not half-hearted and half-day worshippers. When they cannot come to God's house, He will come to theirs; and when the streams are cut off He will open to them the full fountain. When the candles go out, the sun will shine upon them. But withal the inquiry is, 'When shall I come and appear before Thee?' The godly man's desire is for public communion with God. It was so of old, and it is so still.

II. Such was the supreme object of king David's desire, let us now observe the *vehement and irrepressible ardour of that desire.* This appears in the terms he employs to express that desire, and in the comparison he makes with which to illustrate it.

1. Observe the terms he employs with which to express his desire. They are intensely significant of strong and ardent feeling. He does not simply declare I desire God, but I *thirst* for God. My nature is heated with fervent longing for Him. Thirst is unappeasable until it obtains the cooling and refreshing element. Hunger may be appeased and worn down by exhaustion. By various means its cravings may be allayed. But not so with thirst; it can only be quenched by drinking. Observe further, he does not say, *I* thirst for God, but *my soul* thirsteth—my whole emotional and passionate being: and this throbs and palpitates with fervent desire—'My soul panteth.' It sinks exhausted with deep, pervading

feeling: 'My soul fainteth for the courts of the Lord's house.' 'My soul followeth hard after God.' It pursues him closely and perseveringly until it is breathless by hard and long continued effort. And in the sixty-third psalm, before referred to as being associated with this, in time and occasion, the terms employed are similar in their intensity and strength of meaning, 'My *soul* thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.' 'My *heart* and my *flesh* cry out for the living God.' These terms and expressions signify that in the very depths of his nature, and throughout his whole being of heart, soul, and flesh, the psalmist longed for God, and for communion with Him.

But this is spread out for contemplation by the comparison which he institutes: 'As the *hart* panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.' The hart, or deer, or gazelle of the east, is one of the most fleet and nervously timid of creatures, and when pursued by the hunters, it leaps and springs upon the mountains from peak to peak, and bounds over the hot, burning plains, as with the wings of the wind, until it becomes heated throughout its whole nature, and gasps with thirst. Fearful and palpitating it glances around for water, and not finding it on the mountains or in the plains, it makes for the water brooks which flow and meander in the valley between the hills. When still pursued and hit by the archer, in its distress, with red, burning eyes, with quivering limbs, it puts its white, foaming mouth to the ground, moaning and braying aloud in its death-thirst for water. 'There,' says David, the poet, perhaps with such an illustration before him in his hiding place of

the wilderness by the Jordan, where the hunted, stricken deer might actually appear—'There,' says he, 'is the true emblem of my state. I am hunted and pursued by my enemies, who cry, "Persecute and take him!" Yea, the archers have shot hard at me; they have hotly pursued and sorely wounded me; and as the hart panteth for the water brooks, brayeth and crieth aloud for them, so panteth and crieth aloud my soul after Thee, O God.'

Thus we learn from David's example, as we do also from other portions of Scripture records and teaching, that true experimental religion is *no mere cold abstract principle separate from emotion,* but is *an ardent spiritual life, filling the whole being with the strongest feeling.* David's entire nature was athirst with fiery longing for communion with God; so that his heart became hot within him, and his soul fainted for the courts of the Lord's house.

Some overprudent, orderly and well-meaning persons would not allow strong emotion and heated excitement in connection with religion. They are ready to allow fervour, zeal and excitement in other things. The student, the statesmen, the warrior, the merchant, the tradesman, may all be ardent and excited in their pursuits; but religious experience and practice they would have measured and circumscribed by what they call 'moderation.' They would have no excess or overflow in feeling or expression for it. They would have each man's experience and language meted out in a fixed, formal measure of ascertained quantity; and that they would have strickled over flat and even with the rod of outward decorum; and all expressions upon it they would have weighed grain by

grain in the scales of philosophical exactness. They would have Christian disciples made spiritual icicles, each glittering in clear snow; prismatic colours of intellectual wintry light, but destitute of inward warmth, and outward melting. And if you remind them of Scripture terms and expressions significant of strong emotion and feeling, they seek by dry, hard, verbal criticism to reduce all such to figurative and poetical exaggerations. For Jeremiah to have exclaimed, 'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!' For the spouse in the Canticles to have proclaimed herself 'sick of love'; and for David, Peter, Paul and John to have expressed themselves ardently as they did, all this was a mere outbreak of rhetoric, not to be literally interpreted. 'Be sober,' say they to the ardent, zealous Christian, 'and let your moderation be known unto all men!' Let such discreet and exacting advisers go to the heated, panting deer, and bid it be still and moderate; and if by words they can compel repressed feeling in that case, then let them turn to the ardent, zealous Christian athirst for God, and expect to repress it in him; for his language is, '*As* the hart panteth after the water brooks, *so* panteth my soul after Thee, O God'!

And where this ardent thirst exists, nothing but 'God, the living God,' will satisfy it. As we have said, nothing but water will quench thirst; and nothing but God will fulfil the desire of the godly man. Nor will any measured, partial communication satisfy. The rill, the stream, will not satisfy the heated, perspiring, pursued deer. It needs the water brooks

into which it can plunge and drink freely, and that again and again—in which it can bathe and swim for relief. And so with the soul athirst for God. It is not a drop of Divine communication that will suffice. The soul for all God's fulness cries. It is not one scattered beam gleaming through surrounding shade upon the soul, it is the health of God's full shining countenance that is desired. It is not sample bunches of grapes from Eschol that will satisfy, but the full vintage. Not a sidelong glance from the lattice, but the soul enfolded in the embrace, and exclaiming, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.' The thirsting soul in its unmeasured yearnings for the living God, asks, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.' It seeks to comprehend with all saints what is the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God. Its ceaseless prayer is 'Stretch my faith's capacity wider, and yet wider still: Then,' &c.

Have *we* this *ardent, burning, unquenchable thirst for God?* Not unless we have been renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Ghost; for this inward longing for God as our chief good is not natural to us. It is the fruit of the Spirit's grace within us. Man does thirst for good. The very first cry he utters with conscious existence is, 'Who will show me any good?' And this is his daily litany all through life. But, alas! he seeks good where it is not to be found, and where 'all is vanity and vexation of spirit.' Upon every source and fountain of the world is written what Jesus declared to the woman of

Samaria: 'Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.' But, as the Saviour added, 'Whosoever drinketh of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst.' The source and flow shall be inexhaustible. 'It shall be in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life.' Come, then, thirsting sinner, to this unfailing and all-sufficient fountain of good. Come and pray to Christ: Give me of this water, that I may not thirst again, neither come hither to draw. Come, proud man of ambition, panting for place and power, and sit at the feet of Him who has said, 'Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.' Come, sons and daughters of pleasure, chafed and heated by your fruitless pursuits; come, slaves of mammon, driving your heavy-laden waggons up hill with locked wheels; come, conscience stricken, wounded sinner, pierced by the arrows of Divine truth, and looking eagerly for relief; come, trembling, palpitating backslider, like Ephraim, bemoaning thy lost and desolate condition; come, young man; come, young woman; come, child of the Sunday-school; come, boy or girl of the pew; come, all that thirst; for the cry and shout of heaven is, 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.' Come, for the Saviour declares, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.' All through the Bible the invitation sounds its loud and merciful call; and here at the very end of it the call is emphasised and reiterated—'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him

take the water of life freely.' Freely! without limit, without stint, and without meritorious good works of any kind. May the Holy Spirit help you to come! Amen.

VII.

CHRISTIAN HOLINESS.

'But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'—1 JOHN i. 7.

THESE words relate to the deep things of God, and must be approached with prayerful reverence if their meaning be understood, and their value appreciated. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.' But while this declaration is literally true, so that there is not a superfluous and useless verse in the Bible, yet it does not necessarily follow that all parts of it are equal in fulness and comprehensiveness of revelation. All *creation* is from God; and one part is as much from Him as another; but it is no disparagment of one part to say that it is not equal in height, and depth, and breadth of sublime grandeur to another: to say, for instance, that our own Westmoreland and Cumberland mountains are not equal to the Alps or the Andes; or that the Mediterranean Sea is not equal to the Atlantic Ocean; or that the Atlantic Ocean is not equal to the Pacific. There are heights and depths in *revelation* as there are heights and depths in creation; and the text is an example of this. For in the brightness and fulness of its teachings it raises us above the ordinary life of Christian professors

into the holy place of the inner sanctuary, where, amidst the 'excellent glory' which shines forth, the pure in heart see God, and intimately commune with Him.

The beloved disciple, who by Divine inspiration wrote the words of the text, affirms it to be so. He declares that the truth herein revealed is of *transcendent importance*, and it is given to afford the *fullest enjoyment* to the followers of Christ. 'These things,' says he, 'we write unto you that your joy may be full.' What things are they so supremely glorious as to afford by their revelation fulness of joy? The apostle St. John immediately sets them forth. 'This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' This is the sum and substance of all revealed to us by the messenger of the covenant, when he dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. If then, argues the inspired writer, we profess to have union and converse with Him who is light, 'and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth'; we live and move in a totally different element, where God is not, and where He has no communion with any one. 'But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light,' then we are in the region where God and His saints commune together; and being in the same region, 'we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.' It is sprinkled upon us continuously, so as to free us at all times from guilt, condemnation and impurity. It makes and keeps us clean.

Let us now prayerfully seek to know, as far as may be, the height and depth of Divine teaching in this

precious portion of Divine revelation, by inquiring, First, What is the *light* in which Christian believers are here said to walk? Secondly, What is the *fellowship* of which they are here said to be partakers? and, Thirdly, What is the *purity* which they are here said to experience? The full meaning of this portion of Divine revelation we may not be able to comprehend; but by pursuing the inquiries named, the main parts of our subject will be brought before us.

I. Then, we ask, *What is the light in which Christian believers are here said to walk?*

And at once we reply, it is the light of *God Himself.* For, observe, this is affirmed by the apostle positively and emphatically. 'God is light,' declares St. John, who with the quick intuition of love, and with the piercing glance of his emblematical eagle, soared into the highest heaven of revelation, and beheld more clearly than any other apostle the character and nature of the Divine Being. 'God is light.' Not only has light in Himself—that He clothes Himself with it as a garment, or that He dwells in it—but is light in His very essence and being. Just as this same apostle further on in this epistle declares, 'God *is* love.' Not only has love, and is loving to every man; but love is His very nature. God *is* love. What an amazing truth is here revealed to us! Do you wonder that St. John should assert its transcendent importance, or declare it to give fulness of joy to Christian believers? 'God is light.' The source and radiance of it in Himself. In this declaration is collected into one luminous point of Divine revelation all our theology, and all our highest philosophy. *He* is light. Let us hail and welcome this

great revelation with grateful delight; and let us employ all available means for keeping it constantly in our remembrance. As the sun rises in the morning and sheds his early beams upon our waking eyes, so that we see and feel that it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, let us consider 'God is light.' As that welcome and glorious luminary climbs higher and higher into the heavens, until he reaches the meridian, and sheds his radiance on all surrounding creation, giving to it life and beauty, let us call to mind that 'God is light.' As he sinks down into the west, gilding clouds, mountains, sea and plains with richest splendour, let us ponder the truth here affirmed, that 'God is light.' And when he has disappeared from above the horizon, and the world is wrapt in solemn darkness through his disappearance; when we seek artificial luminaries to relieve and help us; and when, with advancing years, we lie increasingly awake upon our beds, to think and to meditate in our night watches upon what the noisy world asleep around us shall not intrude upon, let us ponder in our minds, let us revolve it in our thoughts, and bring it round again and again for reflection, what St. John here declares to be the very climax of Divine revelation, that 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' Light is the most transparent, spiritual substance in the universe; it is the most quick, active and diffusive. It pervades and fills all creation with its radiance and power. Fit emblem of Jehovah, who is a spirit, who is omnipresent, and who gives light and life to all things.

But if the opening announcement of this declaration be so wonderful, what shall we say of the *assumption by the apostle* which immediately follows?—

that we walk in that light. This is dazzling and confounding to the human mind beyond expression; and we are ready to exclaim: 'Dark with excessive light His skirts appear'! 'God is light,' and we walk in that very light. How amazing! For, observe, it is in the very light of God Himself that Christian believers are here said to walk. Not simply in the light of *revealed truth;* though that makes them 'the children of light and the day.' Not in the light of *godly example* shining upon them from a great and luminous cloud of witnesses, such as St. Paul sets forth in the 11th chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews; and which bright cloud of patriarchs, prophets, martyrs and confessors has been largely extended and brought near to us by the lives of holy saints in descending generations, down to those who live among and before us at the present. It is not in any reflected and borrowed light whatever that holy Christians walk; have their course; live and move, and have their being, as saints of the Most High; but in the light of *God Himself.* What can be the meaning of this? It cannot signify that they exist and pursue their way in the Divine nature itself. That belongs to no creature, however good and exalted. In that sense of supreme and absolute godhead, He 'dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto.'

In what sense, then, can it be said that 'God is light,' and then be assumed that we 'walk in that light'? It is in the light of God's *moral excellence,* as the context shows; and it is in this sense that we are declared to be 'partakers of the Divine nature.' There are three general meanings with which the word light is employed figuratively and significantly in the

Scriptures—*knowledge, happiness* and *holiness.* And in all these senses the term might be applied from this epistle, in relation to those who have been renewed after the image of God. It was to lead 'little children,' 'young men,' and 'fathers,' as he describes believers of different stages in the Christian life, into the truth, and that they might have the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ that he, the aged disciple, in ripe matured spiritual wisdom, wrote to them this epistle. Light gives certainty; men stumble in darkness, but in the light they walk firmly and surely. It is so with walking in the light of Divine revelation; they have in it the riches of the full assurance of understanding; they know in whom they have believed. It is their light not only of intellectual knowledge, but also of Divine assurance. It is the light of the Holy Spirit directly witnessing within believers that they are the children of God. And it was to shed upon them not only the light of knowledge, but also of *happiness,* as he himself declares, that their joy might be full. It is the light and joy of assurance. Light opening upon the soul from the very face of God. In this sense, 'light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' 'They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance,' says the psalmist. They shall have the joyous assurance of Divine favour.

But without excluding these meanings of the term light from its use in this part of the text,—for God is infinite in wisdom and in happiness,—yet the main idea here expressed, undoubtedly is that of *moral excellence* —the light of *Divine purity.* This appears from the argument of the apostle immediately following the declaration that 'God is light,' and in the use of the

explanatory term, darkness, for the opposite of what he refers to. 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.' 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness,'—that is, live in sin,—then 'we lie and do not the truth.' We exhibit a glaring and a practical falsehood. We are in another element than that of God. We are in sin, where God is not. But if we walk in the light of truth, goodness and holiness, then we are in the Divine element, and have fellowship with Him—have intimate and loving communion with Him. We are godly—godlike—and that not by sudden starts and fitful steps, but by *continuance*, and *progressively* 'we *walk* in the light, as He is in the light.' To walk in light as He is in the light signifies not only to walk in knowledge and in happiness, but also in *holiness*—to 'keep ourselves unspotted from the world'; to 'deny ungodliness and worldly lusts'; and to keep ourselves pure from the sinful practices of the untoward generation around us. This is the truth pervading this whole epistle, showing that salvation through Christ leads to holiness; that the Christian hope of being like Christ leads to purity; that the love of God is to keep His commandments. The darkness of sin is to 'do not the truth'; and the light of God, in which devoted Christians walk, is *holiness*, such as He requires who says: 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.'

And need I say to you that there is such a state of conformity to the Divine character to be attained in this life as to be fitly termed *light;* and there is such daily continuance and progress in that state as to be appropriately described as '*walking* in the light?' There is such a course of holy love and obedience to be pur-

sued in this probationary world as shall raise the soul above all darkness and uncertainty, and which shall bring it moment by moment within the light of Divine presence and favour. There is a celestial glory flooding the soul which is raised above sin and the world, altogether unknown to low, earthly-minded professors of religion. There is a spiritual radiance upon such which is not seen or felt by men of unsanctified passions and worldly pursuits. They dwell in God, and He in them. They are the temples of God. He lives in them, walks in them, and fills them with all His fulness. They banquet and feast with Him. He comes into them and sups with them. Their fellowship, as the apostle affirms in this chapter, is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. That fellowship is *close* and *intimate*. They walk in the light as He is in the light. It has ever been so with holy and devoted servants and sons of God. 'Enoch walked with God' on earth, and when he passed from earth he was with God still—'and he was not' upon the earth longer to continue in a probationary state, for God took him to Himself in heaven. 'Abraham walked before God, and was perfect.' He was expressly called 'the friend of God.' It was so with David, who sang, 'The Lord is my light, and my salvation.' It was so with Daniel, greatly beloved of the Lord. It was so with John the Baptist, who was 'a burning and a shining light.' It was so with apostles and early Christians, spoken of as 'children of light,' clad in the 'armour of light,' having 'put off the works of darkness,' and who were addressed as those who shone as 'lights in the world,' and who were 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of

the saints in light.' And it has been so with holy men and women since; such as De Renty, Fenelon, Madam Guyon, Archbishop Leighton, John Fletcher, John Wesley, George Whitfield, Lady Maxwell, Hester Ann Rogers, Bramwell, Stoner, Smith, and a host besides. O, yes! there is a holy walk with God in light to be attained in this world, wherein there is no darkness, and which brings heaven all around us, and that not fitfully and at intervals, but constantly. It is a light to be *walked* in; to be continued in; a light of purity in which the holy, obedient believer shall have the testimony that he pleases God. It is the light of devoted, obedient love. Such, then, is the light in which the Christian believer is here said to walk.

II. We next inquire, *What is the fellowship of which they are here said to be partakers?* They 'have fellowship one with another,' says the apostle.

The beloved disciple exults in the consideration of close and intimate association and communion among the followers of the Saviour. His large, loving heart, influenced by the love of the Spirit, led him to this; and he refers to it again and again throughout this epistle; inculcating the love of the brotherhood by the most tender and affecting motives, and showing that in this is the practical and palpable proof of love to God, and of true religion. Indeed, fellowship is the pervading idea of this epistle. But in the text it appears in the highest and brightest form. His pure and penetrating eye sees God shining as the sun, or source of light, in the midst of His saints, pouring the effulgence of His glory upon them, so that they walk together in His light, and are known to be His children by the radiant and unspotted garments in which they

are arrayed. They live and move together in one common element. They are separate from the evil of a corrupt and ungodly world while living in it; and are together in holy life and conversation. They have on them the 'fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousness of the saints'; and are a holy brotherhood, walking and communing together in the light which shines upon them from the eternal Sun of Righteousness in the midst of them.

This is the real uniting bond of all the spiritual and good throughout the universe—*holiness*. Not the coarse, iron links of earthly states and ecclesiastical governments, but the celestial coils of truth and purity, woven from the Divine light which streams upon them from the Lord. This is the bond of union among all Christians of every name throughout the earth; yea, this is the bond of all the spiritual and good throughout the universe, both of earth and heaven. In this sense the Church is one, and includes all sanctified believers, whether here or in yonder bright world above. We speak sometimes of the Church on earth and of the Church in heaven, as if they were two Churches. But this is only for human distinction, and arises from our imperfect state of thought and expression. Spiritually there is but 'one Church of the living God'; 'one family,' both of heaven and earth; one brotherhood in Christ Jesus. Hence, says the apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, 'Ye *are* come'—not ye are coming, but are already come—'ye are come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.' Holiness to the Lord unites all the spiritual and good throughout the universe; and Christian believers feel this, and exult in it. By

the affinities of their spiritual, regenerated nature they are drawn together. United to God, and walking together in His holy light, they are like-minded, and have fellowship one with another.

Christian fellowship is *not a mere human ordinance,* as some suppose, to be sought and exercised as the will of man may determine. It is a Divinely authorized appointment, and is imperatively binding upon all the followers of the Saviour. Indeed, with the godly in Christ Jesus, it is a spiritual necessity for which their souls' instincts crave, and which they must have. And no Church is complete that does not formally and statedly provide for it. Men and women born of God, and living for heaven, must be together. The world is not their region, and they need all the counsel and help to be obtained, not only from reading and hearing the word of God, but from the experience of others. They must be together; they must go to their own company; they must have fellowship one with another. Worldly-minded professors, who have as little to do with religion as circumstances will admit, may question the right and propriety of frequent fellowship among the members of the Church; and may seek to satisfy themselves with communion once a month at the table of the Lord, which in many instances they do not attend; but a soul alive to God, and earnestly devout and spiritual, needs frequent communion with the saints, and will have it; if not in formal weekly meetings, yet in social meetings in their own abodes, or in meetings for reading the Scriptures and prayer. Now, as of old, the language of the godly is, 'I am a companion of them that fear Thee.' Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, and having

felt the powers of the world to come, the invitation is, 'Come all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul.' And even in the most corrupt and wicked periods, when men have forsaken God and robbed Him, '*Then* they that feared the Lord, and thought upon His name, spake *often* one to another.'

Thus it was of old, even under an inferior and preparatory dispensation. And it is more especially so under the Christian economy. The apostles 'were together.' The first converts 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship; and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' 'They were together, and continued daily with one accord in the temple; and, in breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart: praising God, and having favour with all the people.' They were enjoined to confess their faults to one another; to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Fellowship is the *positive institution of the Church* from the beginning, and not an ordinance of Methodism merely. Wesley, under God, revived the ancient lovefeasts, which had fallen into disuse; and established weekly classes for mutual help and service to the people of the Lord, that they might have regular and stated means for Christian communion; means and helps that other Churches now seek, and would provide for under other names, while we who have them are in danger of under-valuing and neglecting them. But fellowship one with another is not a human device. It is of Divine institution, and is a spiritual necessity and enjoyment. It is walking together separate from the world of sin, and in the

light of holiness. Our fathers and mothers in Methodism understood this. They of the 'United Societies' had fellowship one with another—not only at the sacramental table and in lovefeasts, but in class meetings and band meetings, in which they related the dealings of God with their souls under the various circumstances of human life; and sometimes in their communings together their spiritual enjoyment swelled into rapture that was unutterable, and which they felt to be a foretaste of heaven itself, so that they were constrained to sing: 'And if our fellowship below,' &c. Holy souls who walk in the light 'have fellowship one with another.'

If, while including this fellowship of saints, as the loving apostle undoubtedly does by the whole drift and tenor of the epistle, the grammatical construction of the text is to be followed, and *fellowship with God*, with whom believers walk in light, is also intended, then this brings us to the consideration of the very greatest of all privileges, both of earth and heaven. Fellowship is not merely acquaintance and approach; but intimate communion. It is not merely drawing near to God, and ordering our cause before Him; but an interchange of love and a commingling of interests and enjoyments. This St. John had previously declared when he said, 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' Observe the distinct *personality of the Godhead* here spoken of —the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. I cannot dwell upon this, or explain it. But from the undoubted testimony of eminent Christians, which you must have observed in reading the records of their religious experience, it is evident that in their communings with

God they were conscious of fellowship with the distinct persons of the One supreme godhead: not only with the self-existent and independent '*I am*,' but with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Earthly-minded professors, who pray only from a sense of duty, and that as short and seldom as may be, will not understand this. But they that 'delight themselves in the Lord,' enter into the secret place of His pavilion, and linger and wait before the mercy seat until the glory of God shines and burns upon their souls, will know what I am referring to. De Renty, Fletcher, Lady Maxwell, Hester Ann Rogers, Mrs. Cryer and Mary Burton, and others that might be named, knew what it was to have fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost. Brethren, let us in this, as in other relations, honour the Son and the Spirit even as we honour the Father; and we shall be honoured and blessed in doing so. The appointed order of worship is *to* the Father, *through* the Son, and *by* the Spirit. But let us be ever mindful to render equal homage to each of the persons of the undivided and eternal Godhead. 'We call Jesus Lord by the Holy Ghost given unto us,' and 'the Lord is that Spirit,' who quickens, renews and sanctifies the souls of mankind. 'The communion of the Holy Ghost' is to be with us as well as the love of God the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a noble anthem of praise to the triune God is the *Te Deum!* It is the grandest uninspired song of the Church on earth, and seems to be fit for heavenly worshippers. In this respect, as rendering equal homage to the persons of the Godhead, and that distinctly, let us return to the language of the primitive

Church, and sing, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.' They who walk in the light of holy, obedient love have not only companionship and communion with the saints, but have also fellowship with God. They are 'joined to the Lord in one spirit': have union, intercourse, reciprocal affection and delight. There is 'fellowship one with another.'

III. We inquire further upon this text, *What is the nature, and what is the extent of the purity which they who walk in the light and have fellowship one with another experience?* 'And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

A question here arises as to the *period* of time here spoken of; whether to the *past* or to the *present.* Whether to efficacious means of the believer's cleansing at the moment when he first believed, or at the moment when he now and still believes. Doubtless, the efficacious means of the believers purification is the same at the beginning as it is ever afterwards. It is the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanseth from sin. But the immediate reference here is to preservation in purity, as the tense of the verb expresses—*cleanseth,* not cleansed. The subject is that of the believer walking in the light of God's moral purity, and the declaration here is that, walking and communing in that light, he is kept and preserved pure day by day, and moment by moment. Devoted to God as His chief good, and continuing in love and obedience to Him, sins of error and infirmity, and of all defilement from the world, are forgiven and washed away by the all-availing efficacy of the blood of Christ. Walking in the light—continuing to do what is just and good—and having fellowship with God and His people, no

spot of defilement is allowed to remain upon the soul, but 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son,' moment by moment, and instant by instant, '*cleanseth* us from *all* sin.' The meaning of this passage is in strict accordance with what the apostle declares at the commencement of the next chapter in his epistle: 'And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation'—the abiding reconciliation—'for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.' Yes, there is *unfailing* and *abiding efficacy* in the blood of Jesus Christ which, for believers who sincerely walk in the light, and perseveringly endeavour to perform the will of God, atones for them and cleanses them from all sin, and that moment by moment, so that condemnation and defilement do not remain upon them for an instant. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne as newly slain, as fresh and efficacious now after 1,800 years as when He first passed from the altar of sacrfice. The lapse of years does not deteriorate His offering, nor exhaust its merit or power:

> 'His offering still continues new,
> His vesture keeps its bloody hue.'

Day by *day*, *hour* by *hour*, and *moment* by *moment*, as the believer walks with God in light, and has fellowship with Him, and with His saints, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth him from all sin.

How glorious this state of salvation! And how precious to the believer, conscious of error, infirmity and defilement, and who knows that he may die at any instant. To walk in the light; to live in the unclouded light of the Divine favour; to have intimate, reciprocal

communion with God and His people; to have all guilt atoned for; to have the original corruption of our nature, in which we were conceived and born, washed away; to have the imagination, that natural fount of iniquity, purified; to have the thoughts of the heart cleansed; to have every stain and spot of sin removed; to be cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit; 'To be sanctified wholly, throughout' the entire man of 'body, soul and spirit,' and to be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord: how great and how blessed is such a state of salvation! Can we exaggerate on this meaning of the text? or estimate it too highly? Salvation from *all sin*, at *all times*, and in *all circumstances;* so that we walk in the light of holiness—have fellowship with God and with His saints; and 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin.' This is not salvation by works, but by grace—though to possess it man must be circumspect and obedient. It is salvation full and blessed, at all periods, and in all conditions. Salvation in weakness, temptation, anxiety, sorrow, infirmity, age, and feebleness extreme; in failure of health, of memory, hearing, speech. In second childhood, in loss of reason, and in the utmost extremity of life, when the soul separates from the mortal tenement. Then, as before, come as death may come,—suddenly, in the street, at the table, or through months and years of pining sickness. Then, at that crisis of our being, when the spirit passes unalterable to an eternal state, to be 'filthy' or 'holy still.' Then the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin; and purified from all iniquity we shall pass into the immediate presence of God, where there shall be no darkness of

sin, sorrow, or death; but where all shall be light and life for ever and ever! Glorious, indeed, is the salvation which is in Christ Jesus!

Brethren, *do you desire this salvation for yourselves?* Do you see this morning 'the beauty of holiness,' and desire to pass from the thick, suffocating fog of a low worldly state into the light of Christian holiness? Do you long for close and intimate communion with the triune Jehovah,—being made fully free from sin's condemnation and defilement? Do you wish to know experimentally what the apostle here so positively affirms—that 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin?' Then seek it with all your heart, and seek it now. Seek it by the immediate separation of yourself from all that is *evil*, and from all that is *doubtful*, and by the unreserved consecration of yourself to God in body, soul and spirit. And do this in Christ, by faith in His blood, and with sure trust in His mediation; and you shall be 'washed and sanctified through the blood of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God.' There will be no unclouded walk in light for your soul until you do this; no celestial radiance shining around you; no fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ; no communion of the Holy Ghost, and no maturity and fulness of the Divine life until you do it. How long, let me ask, do you intend to continue earthly-minded, low and feeble, spiritually? *How long are you to live with more or less condemnation* and *defilement upon you, exclaiming* as you go 'Unclean! unclean!' Is it to be thus with you to the end of life? Or are you purposing some time to pass into the region of holiness, where you may walk with God and His saints in light? If so,

what is the *date* you have fixed upon for doing so? Is it distant or near? Is it a year hence, or months forward? What is the day set down in your diary for being wholly devoted to God, and cleansed from all sin? When is it to be? Ah! there may be an open grave between you and the distant period marked for the attainment of Christian holiness. Remember the Divine command, 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.' Remember the essential qualification for heaven is holiness; for 'without it no man shall see the Lord.' 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.' And remember, also, that the Almighty promises you purity if you will surrender all to Him, saying, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.' (Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.) *Do you believe this?* Are you willing in this the day of God's power? Then plunge into the fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness. Wait no longer by it, helpless and complaining. Jesus bids you now wash and be clean. Obey, saying, 'To the blest fountain of Thy blood,' &c. Then shall you be 'every whit whole.' Then shall the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse you from all sin. Then shall darkness pass away; your light shall break forth as the morning. Then shall you be a shining example of goodness to all around, in the world, in the Church, and in your family. A Divine, celestial radiance shall rest upon you, and cleansed moment by moment from all sin, you shall be prepared, at any instant, when you may die, to join the hundred and forty-four thousand who follow the Lamb in white robes wheresoever He goeth, and to

mingle with the multitude before the throne who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

Pilgrims of the light, this is your calling and your high behest! Walk in the light. Be watchful. Light belongs to wakefulness. They that sleep, sleep in the night. Have fellowship one with another. Walk in love, as He also walked. Make progress in holiness. Pursue it. Advance in it, with firm and steady steps. The mansions of light, the heaven of purity, knowledge and joy, is before you. It beams upon you from above. There is a shadowy stairway between you and it, but the ladder set upon the earth reaches to heaven. The Lord God Almighty is at the top of it; angels float up and down upon it, to minister to dying saints, and to bear them to glory, where all is clear and bright as the light. Bright are the pearly gates; bright are the walls of precious stones; bright and radiant are the streets of gold; but brighter still are glorified saints, for 'the righteous shine as the sun, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.' Pilgrims of the light, walk onward and upwards, shedding the influences of truth and holiness wherever you go; in the family, in the Church, and in the world. And soon—very soon, with some of you—you will go to 'the inheritance of the saints in light'!

Sinner! Do you feel and deplore your guilt and defilement. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can deliver you from wrath, and from all impurity. His blood cleanseth from all sin. Your sin may be deep and aggravated in its character. It may have been long continued. It may be of scarlet and crimson dye. It

may be doubly, doubly dyed, by backsliding and relapses. But still the blood of Jesus Christ has efficacy and power equal to all your need. It cleanses from all sin. Seek by penitence and faith in the virtue of that blood to experience the great salvation it has procured and brings, and you shall obtain it. 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.' He is the light of the world. He is 'the way, the truth, and the life.' It is His office to save, as much as it is for the sun to shine. Hear Him! He speaks to the believing soul. 'Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!' God help thee. Amen.

VIII.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'—PSALM xxiii. 1—4.

THIS precious pastoral song of praise bears the title of 'A Psalm of David;' and though we may not rely with certainty upon the correctness of all the titles prefixed to the psalms, which, though ancient, have been confessedly attached to them at periods more recent than those when they were severally composed, and then not by Divine inspiration, yet we may confidently do so in this instance. This twenty-third psalm expresses so significantly David's joyous trust in God, and exhibits so many striking characteristics of his simple, perspicuous and experimental style of writing, that we need not hesitate to receive it as his.

The *occasion* on which it was written is not known, for it does not in itself contain any note of historic reference to give it date. It might have been composed when as a shepherd boy he tended his father's flocks on the plains, amidst the mountains and valleys surrounding Bethlehem. The several allusions of the psalm evidently correspond to the features of the

scene of rich pasture land, skirted by deep, dark defiles, as every traveller to that part of the East will be ready to affirm. Or it might have been written in more mature life, in a season of threatened scarcity of food and protection, when enemies were near to him, and the shadow of approaching death seemed to be immediately before him. Nor would it be inappropriate as an ode of thankfulness for his elevation from the shepherd's tent to the royal palace, where, after his conquest over Goliath, he sat at the banquet-table as the king's son-in-law, an anointed guest, with overflowing cup of daily provision. But the more plausible conjecture is that it was written and sung by David in a later period of his life, when, after the various exercises of his chequered course, he reposed securely in old age in the sight of conquered enemies, and by imagery dear to his remembrance from boyhood he expressed firm reliance upon God for all coming emergency, even to that of death itself.

I need not say to you who are familiar with the history of David, and with the productions of his pen, that it was his practice to commemorate in songs of praise the most signal events of his life; so that there are few, if any, important circumstances noted of him in the historic books of Scripture not more or less referred to in his psalms. His shepherd experience of danger and deliverances; his conflicts and triumphs over Goliath and other enemies; his lonely wanderings for the preservation of his life under the persecution of jealous Saul, when he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains, and was solitary as a pelican in the wilderness. His hiding in the cave of

Adullam. His exaltation to the throne of Israel. His sin in the case of Uriah the Hittite. His poignant grief and deep repentance. His recovery of the Divine favour. The rebellion of his son Absalom and of his people. His flight over Olivet and the Jordan. His restoration to royal authority. His return to worship at Zion. His comparative rest after multiplied sorrows and trials. These and other events and circumstances in David's changeful life are celebrated in songs of praise to God unequalled by any other lyric compositions whatever. And with this habit and practice of the psalmist, the most likely conjecture to be offered on this twenty-third psalm is, that it was written by him towards the close of life, when he gratefully reviewed the dealings of God with him through all his days, and thereby heartened himself to confident trust in Him for all he should need and desire in death and eternity.

Be that as it may as to the occasion of the psalm, there can be no question upon its preciousness to all the people of God. More than any other spiritual song it is universally a favorite. It is so appropriately expressive of providential and religious experiences, that its contents are more frequently upon the lips of saintly believers than the contents of any other psalm that could be named. By it the 'sweet singer of Israel' leads joyfully forward the whole host of believers who follow him in the worship and service of God, and sounds forth the welcome language of every saint of the Most High. It is the religious pilgrim's song of experience for life, death, and of his prospect for eternity. How many servants of God under threatened adversity and destitution have quoted the

opening declaration of this psalm, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want!' What multitudes of Christian believers, exulting in the satisfactory provision made for them both in body and in soul, have exclaimed: 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.' Who of us have not in remembrance of recovery from guilty wanderings of heart and life to exclaim, 'He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake'? And of all the words of Holy Scripture on the lips of dying saints, none are more often there than the verse which closes the text: 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'

Let us now prayerfully apply ourselves to the consideration of the selection made from this familiar and precious song of praise, by observing; First, The office of tender and expressive relationship which Jehovah is declared to sustain towards His people—The Lord is their shepherd; and, Secondly, The reasons found in this relationship for abiding confidence in Him for seasonable strength and consolation in the time of greatest emergency: though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death itself, they will fear no evil.

I. This pastoral image of the Lord being the shepherd of His people was, as already recognised, natural to the use of David, who had himself been a shepherd, and knew from experience its deep significance in relation to the necessities of the flock. What we are most familiar with in youth we bear most in remembrance through following life, and from such we draw

forms and images to conceive and to express our views and feelings on what excites our strongest emotions. Thus did the son of Jesse, who in youth was the keeper of his father's sheep in the wilderness. The imagery in early days impressed upon his poetic and susceptible nature remained there through all after perils, and supplied to him the most ready and welcome illustrations for the truths he would set forth. This pastoral form of representation was, therefore, natural to him. And as a poet, quick and alive to analogies of things material and spiritual, he appreciated the significance of the relationship of the shepherd in the Lord's tender and ever watchful guardianship over the flock committed to Him, to the gracious and never failing care over His people, and exclaimed, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' See, however, in this exclamation, not only proof of David's poetic genius, but also of his real and *profound humility*. It is not uncommon for persons exalted to honour in society studiously to avoid any reference to their lowly origin and youthful calling. The psalmist did not do this. He was not ashamed of his shepherd life. He oft-times refers to it. Indeed, the most striking passages of his inimitable writings are drawn from it. We have an example of this in the text; for mark the beauty and the boldness of its opening declaration: 'The Lord'—Jehovah, the sovereign ruler of the universe—'is my shepherd.'

But it would be exceedingly defective for us to view this declaration as being from David the shepherd and poet only. He was not only gifted with poetic genius, but *divinely inspired*, as a prophet and psalmist. It was not by human inspiration, such as

moved Homer, and Dante, and Shakespeare, and Milton to write, that we have this graceful apostrophe from the pen of David; but by inspiration directly and immediately from the spirit of the Lord. He 'wrote and spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost,' as he himself affirms in his last words, when he expressly says: 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.' In his case, as in other cases of the inspired prophets, his characteristic genius appears in his writings, as did Ezekiel's gloomy grandeur, Jeremiah's pathetic sorrow, Isaiah's lofty ardour, appear in their writings. The Spirit fills the vessels with divinely inspired truth, leaving them to bear their several shapes and hues. But it is by Divine authority that he speaks when he says, 'The Lord is my shepherd.'

Indeed, this is one of the many incidental proofs we have in the language of Scripture, of the *condescension of the Most High* in revealing Himself to mankind, by images drawn from what is most familiar to us. Were God to speak of Himself simply as He is, without illustration by human and earthly things, the Bible concerning Him would be a book of abstract and incomprehensible terms. In fact it would be to us no revelation at all. Therefore He lowers Himself down to our capacity, waits upon our weakness, and after the manner of parents who instruct their children by signs and symbols, He graciously instructs us, and shadows forth Himself by characters and creatures seen and known by us. And such is the depth and extent of Divine condescension in this, that there is nothing within the whole range of creation, too low or too familiar for the Almighty to employ in

figure and imagery, whereby to set forth Himself. Down from the soaring eagle, who stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, and beareth them on her wings, to the homely domestic hen, who gathereth her helpless brood under her wings for safety and for warmth, no creature is too mean or common for illustration of the Divine character and conduct. But of all the numerous images employed for this purpose, none are more tenderly and extensively expressive of God's watchful care over His people than that which represents the Lord as their shepherd. The shepherd in the east is ever with his flock, to watch over them and protect them against their enemies; to lead them out to pastures and waters of refreshment; to bring them with safety to the fold, and to drive off from them the evening wolves. The term Shepherd is also most expressive of tenderness, more so than the term King, Creator, or Almighty. Like the term 'Father,' it is endearing to nature, and speaks for consolation as well as for confidence.

On this account, undoubtedly, it is that the image and similitude of a shepherd is often employed in the Scriptures to represent the Divine Being in His relationship to His people. Especially is it thus frequently employed to represent the *Divine Redeemer* and Saviour of mankind. So much so, that by some eminent expositors of the word of God, not only by Horne (who finds the Messiah in all the psalms), but by many others, it has been affirmed in their interpretations, that when David declared 'The Lord is my shepherd,' he made prophetic reference to the Messiah Shepherd, who as the Son of God incarnate, should come in descent from his seed, who should

appear as the Hope of Israel, to guide, to protect and save His people, and whom he called 'Lord.' It was of Him, the Divine Redeeming Shepherd, the dying patriarch Jacob made reference, when of one of his sons he declared, 'From thence is the shepherd; the stone of help.' To Him the psalmist addressed the prayer, 'Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock.' To Him Isaiah refers when he says, 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.' (Isa. xl. 11.) It was to His dispensation and rule that Ezekiel prophesied when he declared for the Almighty, 'I will set up one shepherd.' (Ezek. xxxiv. 23.) And while the prophets foretold the coming, the character, and the government of the Messiah Shepherd, they were not left to overlook the vital fact, that by dying under the stroke of justice, He was to redeem and save His people. 'Awake; O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow!' exclaims Jehovah, by Zechariah. 'Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered,' as our Lord quoted in reference to Himself in His last hours.

Before this He had delivered a parable at length under this imagery, and had declared, 'I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep;' and had set forth how He leadeth out His people, calleth them by name, and keepeth them in security. The apostles, you know, carefully retained the title of shepherd for their Lord. They described Him as 'the Great Shepherd,'—to whom all human pastors and under shepherds are held accountable—as the 'Chief Shepherd.' And in the visions of heaven afforded to St. John at Patmos, Jesus Christ

appeared as the shepherd among His gathered flock; and the apostle says of what he saw, in words which poor Burns, ungodly as he was, declared he could never read from his childhood without shedding tears, 'The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.' Thus with all these references to Christ as the Messiah Shepherd, by patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and by the Saviour Himself, it is hardly to be viewed as a fanciful or exaggerated interpretation of the words of David in his lineal relationship as his son and Lord, and who so frequently in his psalms prophesied of Christ, that when he exultantly exclaimed, 'The Lord is my shepherd,' he made reference to the Messiah Shepherd, who in his human nature should spring from himself, and be the guide and Saviour of His people. And how affecting in this sense is the consideration that He to whom the patriarchs looked forward, and the prophets gave witness, is the same gracious and mighty Redeemer to whom we look and on whom we rely for salvation. The patriarch, the Jew, and the Christian have all trusted in him. With David we call Jesus Lord, by the Holy Ghost given unto us. With the psalmist we feed in green pastures, and with him we exclaim 'The Lord is my shepherd.' The endearing attractiveness of this pastoral relationship of Jesus to His people has been evinced by Christians of all centuries from the beginning of Christianity. Hence in the mutilated frescoes and broken mosaics of catacombs and ancient churches, the representation of Christ as a shepherd is the most common. It has ever been the most precious emblem

of Christ's tenderness and guardian care for His people, as the oldest examples of painting, sculpture and poetry make known. It is still such, and will be ever such.

But observe the *emphatic and assured application* of this office and relationship of the Divine shepherd to David *himself*. 'The Lord,' says he, 'is my shepherd.' There is no hesitation, no doubt whatever admitted to the declaration. It is direct and positive to the fullest degree; and that for himself. He does not declare 'The Lord is *a* shepherd,' or 'The Lord is *the* shepherd,' as He is to all His people collectively, but 'The Lord is *my* shepherd,' personally and individually. The doctrine of assured salvation is no new doctrine. David knew it and rejoiced in it, as did Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who had the testimony in all he did that he pleased God. And it is as individuals we are saved, strengthened and preserved, and that by our personal relation to Christ. It is not our visible union to the flock: not being enrolled among the members of the Church, and appearing publicly with them. It is individual union with Christ that secures salvation for us. Take out of this sentence the monosyllable 'my,' substitute for it the indefinite article *a*, or the more definite article *the*, and the golden clasp of the sentence is loosened from us, and its binding, sustaining, and joyous power upon us is gone. Let us be careful to realise for ourselves individually that the Lord is my shepherd. Then we shall experience with David the consequent blessedness which he rejoiced in.

II. The first part of it declared in the psalm before us is *full security from destitution*: 'I shall not

want.' This was the logical and legitimate conclusion to be drawn from the premises affirmed. The Lord—the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, the good, the tender and omnipresent Being—is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want. Suppose the opposite deduction had been drawn from the fact affirmed, and he had said 'The Lord is my shepherd, therefore, I shall want,' how irrational, inconsistent, and self-contradictory would have been the declaration. It is a blessed necessity of truth as well as of faith; of reason, as well as of religion, that if we can affirm 'The Lord is my shepherd,' we not only may add, but we are bound in true logical sequence to add, 'I *shall not* want.'

'*Want*,' as you know, is a relative term, and men use it not only as expressive of actual necessities, but rather according to their inward cravings for what they desire. It is a different term in its real meaning to that of the term 'need,' which is often confounded with it. A man may possess thousands of gold and silver beyond what he really needs, and yet want or crave thousands more. A monarch may conquer all the world as far as known in his time, and weep because there are not other worlds to conquer. Ungodliness is ever unsatisfied. It craves that which it has not. It is ever in want. But 'there is no lack to them that fear the Lord.' They have learned in whatever state they are in to be content. They feel no unsatisfied craving for what they do not possess—no want.

Observe the *moderation* of the psalmist in this expression. He does not affirm 'I shall be rich; abundance of wealth shall be my inheritance; but simply, 'I shall not want.' Riches are not always

most profitable. They make it hard to possess them, and to enter into the kingdom of heaven. 'The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.' Poverty rather than wealth has most frequently been the portion of God's people. Here, as in other respects, a medium state is safest and best; and there was reason in the prayer of Agur, as he himself shows: 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; but feed me with food convenient for me.' David well knew the precariousness of riches, and how they might make wings to themselves and fly away. He, a monarch, had begged bread of a churlish villager, the husband of Abigail, who refused it to him. He had wandered forth under persecution, thirsty and longing for water from the well of Bethlehem. He had been deserted by his people; rebelled against by his son Absalom; cursed by Shimei; reduced to the greatest straits; yet the Lord had graciously supplied his need, and he exclaimed from experience, as well as by strict reasoning, 'I shall not want.'

And see how *positive* the assurance of this is. By the use of a single negative, he sweeps away all ground for doubt—'I shall *not* want.' War, famine, desolation and desertion may come; I may be driven into the wilderness by rebellion; but even there the Lord will provide for me. I shall not want. The Lord my shepherd will provide for me. The young lions may lack and suffer hunger, but I shall not want. And thus may all the accepted servants of God confidently express themselves; for 'they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.' The cruse of oil may be reduced in its contents, but it shall be replenished. Now, as in the case of Oliver Heywood,

the last morsel of food in the house may be eaten; and if so, rich men shall be rendered sleepless until they send bread to the man of God. And if, as in the case related by Bishop Burnet, a poor widow shall be reduced in supply, until, as beheld through the chinks of a window shutter, she shall be seen kneeling against a bare table, with only a crust of dry bread and a cup of cold water upon it; yet free from fear and unsatisfied craving, she shall be found lifting her hands in gratitude over the bread and water, and be heard exclaiming, 'All this and Christ! All this and Christ!' The Divine promises to the godly man are, 'Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.' 'The Lord God is a sun,' &c. 'Seek first the kingdom of God,' &c. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things,' as the Apostle Paul declares, 'having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Well, then, the servant of God who can affirm 'The Lord is my shepherd,' may surely add, 'I shall not want.'

III. But it is not only bare security from destitution that he who has the Lord for his shepherd has to declare, but also *satisfactory rest and enjoyment amidst abundant supplies;* for, says David, 'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.' The sheep having been fed on open plains is brought to rich, verdant fields, in which it feeds to the full, and with full satisfaction lies down amidst luxuriant grass, cropping as it will the fresh, budding, tender springings, and that near to calm flowing streams, to which it can be led without noise or disturbance. The marginal reading here is 'tender, springing grass,' signifying young springing herbage

in rich pasture ground, where the grass is so thick and abundant, that the sheep can lie down in it.

The green pastures are to be interpreted as the *truths of God's word and the ordinances of religion*, wherein the Good Shepherd maketh the souls of His people to lie down for nourishment and rest. These are the fields of never failing supplies, ever fresh and ever abundant. The truths of Holy Scripture are ever fresh, and Divine ordinances are ever invigorating, even as ever budding grass. Truths of Scripture have been read again and again, even from youth to old age, but never become stale, hard, or dry; but are opened and applied by the Holy Spirit, and seem as new as if they had never been read or heard before: and so with the ordinances of the closet and the house of God, they are ever fresh and new. What other book than the Bible will bear daily reading as it does? And what exercises are there that retain their freshness and invigorating power as do the ordinances of the sanctuary? They are all as budding, tender, ever nourishing grass; proving that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God—that the declaration of Jesus is true when He says, 'The words that I speak are spirit and life.'

Observe here the term employed is in the plural form. It is *pastures*, not pasture, or a single field; for there is *variety* as well as abundance in the means of grace. There is not only the written and preached word. There are Sabbath assemblies, united prayer and songs of praise. There is communion at the table of the Lord and the fellowship of saints. There is rest for weary souls after the toils and heat of the day, such

as reference is made to in that pastoral, the Canticles, where the soul inquires of the Shepherd, 'Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.' Devoutness strengthens and is nourished by *meditation*—by lying down to ruminate on Divine truth. The silly sheep if left to itself would wander forth and never rest—ever seeking change—and fail to find nourishment; but the Good Shepherd maketh it to lie down in the green pastures, and leadeth it not by tumultuous, distracting cataracts, but beside the still waters, where it can drink leisurely and without disturbance. And it is not in continuous change—in wandering from one place to another; not in religious dissipation—in running from one eloquent preacher to another, and from one scene of excitement to another; but in calm, peaceful meditation, when the soul lies down to ruminate upon known truths, extracting from them lessons and motives, that nourishment is received. 'Come ye here,' says Jesus to His labouring and journeying disciples, 'and rest awhile.' Upon the bed, and in the night watches, when there is nothing to disturb, we are to remember God our maker, who giveth songs in the night. 'He leadeth me' gently and simply beside the still waters. He gives spiritual consolation by the supplies of the Spirit with His exceeding great and precious promises as found in His word and ordinances.

IV. 'He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.' He recovers the soul from its foolish and guilty wanderings. This reminds us of the affecting parable of the lost sheep given us by the Saviour, when the Good

Shepherd goes after the straying sheep until He finds it, and when He has found it, puts it on His shoulder and brings it back rejoicing. This He hath done for us again and again. But this part of the psalm does not simply mean that He recovers wandering backsliders, but also that He re-invigorates drooping and exhausted believers. After prolonged temptation, severe trials and hardships, which bring weariness, He revives the strength, and restores the soul to freshness and vigour, and that fully; for He leads it in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. He not only gives peace but renewal in righteousness,—leading it forward in the way of life,—and that not because of its own personal merit in it, but for His own name's sake. For the honour of His own undeserved mercy and grace.

V. And now the sense of all sufficiency in the Lord is carried out to the fullest extent to the darkest and heaviest trial that can possibly be contemplated, even that of *death itself*, and he says, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' He had given proof and illustration of all needful provision made for him by the Divine Shepherd; and in the fulness of satisfaction afforded, as also in restoring grace and strength, he now looks forward to what shall yet come to try him to the utmost, and declares that with the Lord as his shepherd, he will fear no evil—no not even in death itself, with all its darkness and shadows. This strong confidence for the future is founded on experience in the past, as when he declares in another psalm, 'Because the Lord has been my help, *therefore* in

the shadow of His wing will I rejoice.' And thus should we reason and sing in the spirit of the familiar verse :—

> 'His love in times past forbids me to think
> He'll leave me at last in ruin to sink.
> Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review,
> Confirms His good pleasure to bring me quite through.'

The descriptive representation of death as the *valley of shadow* is peculiar and powerful. It is that of the elongated shadow of man's last enemy cast over a deep valley, and filling it with the blackness of darkness the most awful. It is not David's own original idea. You find it in the book of Job; that book of grand and solemn poetry, from which David and the prophets drew much of their finest imagery. Hence in the 10th chapter of that book, and at the 21st verse, you read, 'Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.' And you have the expression repeated again and again, as in the 12th chapter at the 22nd verse, and as in the 16th chapter at the 16th verse, as also in later chapters of that most ancient and most powerful of all poems. And from these repeated expressions it is plain that what was originally intended was *death* itself, and not merely some dark trial that besets the Christian pilgrim in his way from the City of Destruction to the Heavenly Jerusalem, as Bunyan has interpreted. It is the last and most dreaded trial at the end of life, which every thoughtful man looks forward to as the greatest

emergency he will have to endure. The psalmist looked forward to it, and declared that even in it he would fear no evil.

Observe the *aptness* and *force* of the similitude employed. Death is a 'valley.' It is not an even and elevated ground where the living dwell. It is a descent down from the mountain of life and health into a depth of a midway region that has to be traversed before ascending the heights of the Heavenly Zion. There is light on the mountain of life, and there is light on the mountain beyond; but between these two mountains there is a valley which all the living must cross before they reach the Jerusalem above. This is a land of darkness, full of solemn shadow, from which human nature shrinks instinctively, and that in the good man as well as in the ungodly. It is the valley of the *shadow of death.* This is a representation that eastern travellers will appreciate, and more especially if they have seen the valleys of Palestine filled with solemn darkness, where no twilight lingers to relieve the deep gloom, and where between the hills all is black and silent as death. The valleys around Bethlehem, well known by David, are strikingly of this kind, particularly towards the Dead Sea. There precipitous hills overshadow deep defiles, and fill them with darkness that would naturally frighten the sheep and make them tremble and start, as the son of Jesse led them home to the fold after having been feeding in the green pastures by day. In such circumstances the sheep would naturally crowd around the shepherd and trust in him for guidance and protection. So declares the psalmist, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for

"Thou,"' who hast fed and refreshed me in green pastures, '"art with me."'

To the good man, however, the darkness of the valley of death is *not dense and solid.* It is only the darkness of passing shadow. It is not real evil, but only the semblance of evil. As the affrighted sheep find after they have passed the valley that what frowned upon them as the den of a wolf, or the form of a lion, was neither, but only temporary shadow, so the Christian believer finds in death the mere shadow of the original evil threatened against disobedience, and which they who die impenitent realise. 'He that believeth in the Son of God,' Jesus has declared, 'shall not see death.' Shall not see it in its ghastly and destructive form. They only see the shadow of it. Shadow has no substance in it. It is not a solid body. It is the exclusion of light. Hence it may affright but cannot injure. The shadow of a serpent does not bite. The shadow of a wolf does not devour. The shadow of a giant does not smite down to the ground. And the shadow of death, elongated as it may be in the valley, has no arrow to pierce the soul of the expiring believer. Death is the enemy of nature, he is man's last enemy, and he is the crowned monarch of all that is terrific—he is 'the king of terrors'; but he has no dart to strike with injury the believer in Christ. He is to such only the shadow of evil, and not its reality, even though he fill the valley with solemn gloom. Sometimes the very shadow passes away from the valley, and at eventide it is light with the brightness of Christ's presence, and of His revelation.

Since the time of David and of Job, Jesus, the

'forerunner,' has Himself passed through the valley, and has broken, so to speak, a way out of it on the other side. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, so that light comes streaming back from heaven itself to illumine the valley, as in the case of the Methodist Dairyman's Daughter, as related by Legh Richmond, who when spoken to on death as the dark valley, replied, 'Sir, it is not dark; Jesus is with me, and His presence illumines the valley, and it is all light.' As your own Thomas Jackson experienced, who much as he had admired Charles Wesley's poetry in life said when dying he could not realise what the poet had written on 'death's dreadful shade.' It is not always so. Sometimes the Christian believer, full of solemn thoughts of God and eternity, and in humble remembrance of ungrateful returns for abundant mercies, goes down into the valley as does the palpitating sheep as it treads the steep descent of the dark defile. David with all his confidence seems to have had something of this feeling, when he speaks of 'walking' through the valley. He does not rush into it with thoughtless haste. He would approach it deliberately. Reckless hurry—thoughtless indifference—does not become entrance into the valley of the shadow of death, though there may be no fear of positive evil. As my sainted mother said, whom amidst all circumstances connected with a large family and an extensive household I never saw in a state unfit for death, as I should judge—as she said, when apprised of her immediate danger, after expressing full confidence in Christ as her Saviour, 'It is a solemn thing to die!' But while the valley is before the dying Christian with all its shadow, darkness and

deep solemnities, it is *through it* he passes. He does not remain in it. He does not dwell in it. It is the place of passage only, and not of abode, though sometimes the expiring saint lingers longer in it than he expected. But still it is *through* the valley. As certainly as he enters it he shall emerge from it; and though there may be faintness, exhaustion and bodily suffering, yet there is no moral injury in it. So there need be no fear of positive evil.

Observe *the grounds of the psalmist's confidence* as here declared: 'For Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' Amazing care and condescension! The Shepherd with His dying sheep! The Almighty with His exhausted creature! The Lord of life and glory with His people in the dark valley of death, not only to strengthen and sustain their exhausted nature, but to comfort them—to administer seasonable consolation! And this not only at their entrance to the valley, when He brings them to it, calling their names, so to speak, and leading them out of life into death; but continuing with them until He brings them safely into the goodly land beyond Jordan. He does not bring the Christian to the entrance of the valley, and then leave him to pass through it alone, saying, 'I have been with you to the last trial, and have hitherto led and preserved you; now prove your confirmed faithfulness by pressing your way to the other side of the valley, where I will meet and welcome you into the heavenly Canaan! But the Good Shepherd continues with His followers, still leading and protecting them; so that they may never perish, and that none may pluck them out of His hands. He never leaves or forsakes His people. He is not only

their guide even unto death, but *through* it, as the psalmist here proclaims, 'Though I walk *through* the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me.'

How blessedly has this presence of Christ with His people in death *been realised!* The history of the Church is full of memorials of this; and most Christian families have precious mention to make of such down from generation to generation. Sometimes the rapture of Christ's conscious presence makes the cup of enjoyment even in death to flow over. As one testified who had closed his eyes for death in extreme bodily exhaustion, and on tasting the reviving cordial applied to his pale, blue lips, and seeing his family weeping, exclaimed, 'What are you weeping for? I never was in such a rapture as I am at this moment,' and then instantly expired. And as *Mr. James Heald* declared when dying, 'The presence of the Lord glows around me in a way I never experienced in life.' If ever Jesus is with them that trust in Him, it is when they are dying. Then He is *with them* to give them the anointing grace of His Holy Spirit; to separate them wholly from earthly things; to break asunder the last lingering desire for them; to cleanse and purify body, soul and spirit, and to preserve the wholly sanctified man blameless; to show it the path of life, and to lead it into the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy; and to His right hand where there are pleasures for evermore. What consolation Christ gives to His saints in death we must die to experience. Sweet in dying is the presence of beloved relatives and friends. Precious is the ministering servant of God preparing the sacramental table at the bedside, and giving to

the parched lips the emblems and memorials of Christ's dying love. But sweeter and more precious is the presence of the Saviour, who gives the bread of life sent down from heaven, and the cup of rich consolation as the last foretaste of the eternal blessedness, with the assurance that the departing soul shall dwell in the house of the Lord—in the heavenly temple for ever!

The *means* by which the Divine Shepherd comforts His people in the valley of the shadow of death are here declared. 'Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.' The *rod* is the emblem of the shepherd's office, the sign of his authority and service. With it he guides, counts and governs his sheep. All who are Christ's pass under His rod, and are under His rule and government whose domain extends over all conditions of His people; for He is Lord over all, both of the living and the dead. He has the keys of hell and of death, and has the keys of Hades as well as of the grave. The assurance of this gives real consolation to dying saints. The *staff*, with its crook at the head of it, is the instrument with which the shepherd extricates the sheep from entanglements, by which he lifts them up from falling, and by which he beats off from them the evening wolves, and all enemies; and by this may be understood the strength, the stay, and the protection afforded by Christ to His followers in death by His word and Spirit, when He says to them, 'Fear not! I am with thee.' 'Fear not, little flock, it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom!' Thus the rod of His authority, and the staff of His word as applied by the Holy Spirit, comfort the dying Christian, so that he fears no evil.

Have *we this confidence* in the Lord as our shepherd? Can we sing this pilgrim's song for life, death and eternity? If so, we are blessed beyond expression. 'Happy are the people who are in such a case: yea, happy are the people whose God is the Lord!' But, if not, then we have no reason to expect any provision of good for us in life or in death, for time or for eternity. The Lord not our shepherd? Then there is no supply promised us even for food to sustain life; and we cannot confidently declare, 'I shall not want.' The Lord not our shepherd? Then there are no green pastures for us; no rest and satisfaction for us; no still waters of consolation. The Lord not our shepherd? Then there is no restoration from wanderings, and we are on the way to ruin and destruction. The Lord not our shepherd? Then we shall have to die without His presence to support and to comfort us. The Lord not our shepherd? Then we shall have to depart from Him in judgment among the goats at His left hand, and that under His curse and malediction, and go into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, and not to dwell in the house of the Lord. Sinner! unconverted sinner! backslider! sinner, without Christ, hear His shepherdly voice, and come to Him. He himself entreats you to do so. 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest,' are His words. Hear His compassionate remonstrance. 'Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.' 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' Stop in thy guilty wanderings, resolve to sin no more. Turn at His call. Hasten to His feet. Fall down before Him in lowly humility. Cry, Lord help me! Lord save, or I perish! Trust in Him.

Rely upon His mercy, and He will raise you up. He will place you among His followers, and you shall with truth and confidence exclaim, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' Amen! May it be so.

IX.

BEING FILLED WITH THE FULNESS OF GOD.

'For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

EPHESIANS iii. 14—21.

THE concern of a devoted minister of Jesus Christ for the spiritual welfare of the people of his charge is strong and abiding. In heart-yearning solicitude for the best interests of mankind, it surpasses whatever is felt and experienced in any other state or relationship whatever. Time, distance, suffering, cannot efface or repress it; but through succeeding years of life, in separation, in privation and affliction, and in immediate prospect of death, the pastoral bond of a faithful minister to his people remains and holds him to them in unbroken and undiminished prayerful concern for their religious safety and prosperity. Several striking and affecting instances of this might be quoted from more modern times of persecution;

such as that of Rutherford, or of Joseph Alleine, who in prison, and at the risk of heavier pains and indignities from their persecutors, wrote earnest and affectionate letters of pastoral care to the Churches from which they had been unjustly separated. But the highest example of ministerial solicitude of this kind is evinced by the holy apostle St. Paul. His several epistles, so rich in Christian instruction, and so powerful in godly motive, are imperishable proofs of his profound and all-enduring concern for the spiritual welfare of those to whom he had ministered in the Gospel of the Son of God. And what outbursts of more than fatherly anxiety for the steadfastness, the growth, and the full and sure salvation of such have we in all his epistles. How ardently he longs for them in the bowels of love; and how unreservedly he pours out his whole soul for them in prayerful counsels and admonitions!

This epistle of his to the Ephesians supplies us with ready proof and illustration for this statement. He was at the time he wrote it a prisoner at Rome, not knowing what would befall him there. He had preached the Gospel at Ephesus, on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem; and had there planted a Church, for the establishment and enlargement of which he afterwards personally laboured at Ephesus for three years in succession, until he was driven from it by the tumultuous outcries of the mercenary worshippers of the great goddess Diana. And now, some years after his sorrowful parting with that people of his charge, and when he himself is a prisoner at Rome, the pagan capital of the world, where death threatened him, and where they afterwards beheaded him, he writes to the

Ephesian Church this epistle, full of the most earnest ministerial instruction and counsel for the very highest attainments in Christian excellence. In the midst of this epistle is recorded in the text the prayer which most devoutly he offered to God on their behalf, with its several and advancing petitions; its sure and confident ground of prevalent acceptance. In this sublime and comprehensive prayer, the apostle goes beyond the ordinary sweep of inspired conceptions. Elevated by the Holy Spirit to such an altitude of all-surrounding views of spiritual blessings to be obtained by believers, through Jesus Christ, he exhausts even his amazing power of gifted expression in the language he employs. For what a wonderful succession and combination of terms have we here: Strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man—Christ dwelling in the heart by faith—rooted and grounded in love—comprehending with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height—knowing the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and being filled with all the fulness of God. What a climax have we in the text of inspired thought and expression! And what a magnificent view have we in it of the fulness and glory of Christian privileges!

Let us devote ourselves this morning to the contemplation of these privileges. Let us learn from the apostle's inspired prayer *what blessings* we may seek of God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ; what is the *sure and solid ground* on which we may rest our firm reliance for the fulfilment of our most enlarged petitions; and what is *the ascription of praise* we are to offer to the Divine Being for all the blessings He so bountifully bestows upon His people. We have a

text taken confessedly from the most sublime passages to be found in the Scriptures. A text which in some of its parts is to be meditated upon rather than explained. It is a text of inspired words, which no preacher can hope fully to explain, and which human exposition may easily impair. Therefore it is to be approached, both by preacher and hearers, with profound and prayerful reverence. It becomes us all inwardly to cry, 'Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.'

I. The *blessings* which by this inspired prayer of the apostle we are taught to seek are spiritual blessings; and they are blessings to be sought by believers in Christ, delivered from the guilt and power of sin, and associated together visibly in the Church. For they to whom he wrote this epistle are expressly designated in his opening salutation, 'saints.' They had, by his own declaration, been 'quickened from the death of trespasses and sins,' and had been saved through grace. They had become, as he states, 'fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; and being fitly framed together, they had grown into a holy temple in the Lord, and had been builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit.' But though thus raised up from their ruined state into spiritual life, and resting on a sure foundation, yet they were not so firm and established, and so constantly the abode of Christ, and filled with God, as it was their privilege to be. And so, 'for this cause,' that they might be made perfect, and attain all spiritual blessings, he (the apostle) devoutly bowed his knees to the God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 'of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,' and sought for them, out of the inexhaustible stores of Divine grace—termed 'the riches of His glory'; the blessings which he successively describes.

1. And the first of the blessings for which he prayed, and which we by his inspired prayer are taught to seek, is that of *powerful spiritual strength*—to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. That is to be mightily strengthened in the soul by the Spirit of God, so as to abide steadfast in His service; to perform faithfully the Christian duties; resist manfully the temptations of Satan and of the world; and to endure patiently the afflictions of this mortal life. A weak Christian is necessarily an *unstable* Christian. He is shaken by every wind that blows upon him; and is trembling in feebleness instead of being steadfast and unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord. He is *inconstant* in faith, prayer and in all spiritual exercises. His outward profession is undecided and wavering. He is weak in principle, weak in action, and weak in character; so that he is not only exposed to continuous peril for himself, but he produces no favourable impression upon others; and is in danger, by uncertainty of conduct and inconsistency of life, of bringing dishonour upon the Church to which he belongs.

A weak Christian is *without growth* as well as without stability. He remains a babe in Christ without advancing to maturity. He is beginning religion over and over again, and anew; and is laying again and again the foundation of repentance, instead of leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ and going on

to perfection. He is always at the mere alphabet of religion, ever learning and yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth. A weak Christian is *unable to resist the temptations and assaults of the evil one.* Weak in knowledge, and weak in faith, Satan successfully harasses and discourages him. Not a fear, not a doubt will arise in his soul, but the adversary will strengthen it; for there is no shield to protect, and no sword to defend or to repel. A weak Christian has *not power to overcome the world.* He professes to forsake it; but, like Lot's wife, he does so reluctantly. He lingers and looks back, and is always in danger of being overwhelmed, like her, with destruction. The weak Christian has not *firmness to endure afflictions and troubles.* He has not fortitude of soul adequate to the trials he has to undergo in this probationary life. And there are seasons in the lives of nearly all men when troubles accumulate and multiply until we have to say individually with Jacob: 'All these things are against me.' When not only one wave of sorrow passes over the soul, but when we have to exclaim: 'All Thy billows are gone over me'; and out of the depths we have to 'cry unto the Lord.' And what shall the weak and feeble Christian do at such a season without being strengthened by the Spirit's might in the inner man? Should *persecution* come to the Church of Christ—for that Church is like its head, despised and rejected of men; crowned with thorns; arrayed in mock garments; spit upon and smitten by the world—what would the weak Christian do in such a trial? Would he manfully take up the cross and follow the Saviour, or go back from following Him? Or should *sudden losses of health,* and *property,* and *family* come upon him, as upon *Job;*

or should his own familiar friends deceive and desert him in the time of extremity as they did *David;* or should he be watched by envious eyes, maliciously accused, and wrongfully condemned like *Daniel;* or should he be seized with mortal sickness like *Hezekiah?*

What can support the Christian in such emergency? Not weakness and feebleness. These could not sustain him under lesser trials. And if when running with footmen the soul was wearied, and he fainted by the way, what will he do when summoned to run with horsemen? There must be strength—Divine strength, mightily strengthening the inner man. He must be 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.' He must be 'strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.' It is the Spirit's might within us which alone can sustain and preserve us. It is not *bodily* strength. Sampson had that in gigantic measure, and yet he was weak morally, and fell under the power of temptation. It is not *intellectual* strength. Solomon had that pre-eminently, and yet he fell even down into idolatry. It is not *self-reliance,* which is so much lauded by the world in these days. Peter had this, and yet he fell suddenly and swiftly. It is Divine strength, the almighty strength of the Holy Ghost within the soul, that can fortify it against temptation, uphold it in affliction and trouble, and sustain and preserve it, so that the follower of the Lord shall endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ—shall stand in the evil day, and after having done all stand. Let us, then, by waiting upon God, renew our strength; praying, as we are here taught, that we may be 'strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man.'

2. The next blessing named by the apostle in this sublime and comprehensive prayer is *the indwelling of Christ in the believer's heart*—'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' There is no doubt that in this passage, and, indeed, throughout a great portion of this epistle, there is a figurative allusion to a temple. Architectural phraseology is interwoven with the texture of all his writings; so much so as to suggest that the Apostle Paul had naturally a taste for architecture. He was undoubtedly a man of fine perception, and of well balanced mind, and could not fail to be attracted by what was compact and symmetrical. Hence to 'build up,' to 'edify,' to 'lay a good foundation,' to have 'the chief corner stone,' to have 'the pillar and ground of the truth.' These and other expressions drawn from architecture are scattered throughout his writings. But in this epistle the figurative allusion to a temple is marked and pervading. It might be from remembrance of the celebrated temple of Diana standing in the midst of the Ephesians, or from the superb temple of Jerusalem, familiar to him in his studies in that city. Or it might be from the general attractions of architectural structures, then in their height of perfection throughout the Roman empire; for it was the practice of the apostle to employ figurative allusions most prominent before the parties he addressed, whether of poetry, philosophy, military exercises, agricultural employments, public games and sports, or architectural forms and structures. And in this epistle the figure of a temple is evidently in St. Paul's mind; and it is the pervading allusion of the text. Just before he had described the Ephesian Church as a building fitly framed together, and growing into a

holy temple in the Lord. And now, after praying that the spiritual building may be made strong by the Spirit's might, he prays that Christ may possess and inhabit it as His own: 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Not only in the Church collectively—'the body of Him that filleth all in all'—but in the individual hearts of its members—in *your* hearts individually by faith.

And this, brethren, is the clear and *certain privilege* of the Christian believer—to have Christ dwelling in the heart. To have His constant, abiding presence sensibly within us. Not only to have Jesus the Son of God drawing nigh to us as our beloved friend and companion, but entering into our inmost souls, so that the inner man becomes His consecrated shrine; the 'holy place,' which He purifies, gladdens and irradiates with His glory. 'If any man love me,' says the Saviour, 'he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them,' says God, when speaking of His people. And, says Christ, 'If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him'; I will feast his soul, and rejoice it. 'Christ *in* you,' says Paul to the Colossians—'Christ *in* you, the hope of glory.' Not Christ merely coming to you, meeting you, visiting you, but Christ *in* you; Christ remaining and abiding in you. Not merely meeting us in the closet, at the family altar, in the social and public means of grace; but dwelling in us, whether at home or abroad, in our beds or in the street, the market-place or the sanctuary, so that we are of deed and of truth the living temples of the living God.

And this continuing to be the abode of Christ is *by faith,* says the apostle. He never forgets the great evangelical principle which throughout is instrumental in man's salvation. Justification, sanctification, overcoming the world, living, walking and possessing Christ are all by faith. Faith opens the door for Christ's entrance into the soul, and faith retains and keeps Him there, the loved and joyful inhabitant; for He dwells in the heart by faith.

What a *glorious privilege* is this, to have Christ dwelling in the heart constantly, moment by moment! It was blessed, unspeakably blessed, for Him to come to the heart! It was blessed beyond expression for Him to raise us up from our fallen and ruined condition, and to renew us in righteousness. To fill the temple with holy light and peace, that was blessed indeed. But to feel that He dwells in us, and walks in us; that He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, feasts with us; and to hear His voice speaking within us, saying, 'This is My house, and here I will dwell'; 'I will glorify the house of My glory'; what a privilege is this! How full of awe and holy wonder and delight is the thought of it! We are ready to exclaim with the adoring king of Israel: 'Will God in *very deed* dwell with men on the earth'!

Brethren, let us see in this prayer of the apostle our high privilege in this respect, and resolve to attain it. Christ has mercifully come to our hearts at times and seasons. He came to us when we first believed in Him for salvation; and He would have remained uninterruptedly if we had kept the heart with all diligence, if we had continued to watch and pray lest we should enter into temptation. But, alas! pride,

anger, selfishness, unbelief and other evils were admitted that Christ could not dwell with. Yea, the door of the heart was opened to the world with its overwhelming cares and merchandise. The buyers and the sellers occupied the temple; and the lowing of the cattle, and the bleating of the sheep were heard in it. The tables of the money-changers were set up in it. Fashion vaunted itself in the heart, and vanity puffed it up. And the meek and lowly Jesus had no longer delight in us, and He departed from us. And though in the darkness and desolation which followed, we cried to Him to return and save us, and though in His infinite mercy and grace He has come to us again and again to smile upon us, and to bless us, yet the whole heart has not been surrendered to Him, so that He might live and dwell in us. He has waited to enter; and His locks have been wet with the dew as He stood knocking at the door; or if admitted, it has been as the wayfarer turning aside to tarry only for the night. It has not been to dwell and abide with us in the fulness of Christian privilege, such as the apostle sets forth in the text. It is to be feared that this blessing of an *indwelling Saviour* is not so much appreciated now as in former times. The indwelling of Christ in the souls of believers was a more common phrase formerly than it is now, as may be seen in the writings of the Puritans and pious Churchmen of centuries ago. Alas! the phrase is seldom seen or heard now; and in this case, as in others, it is to be feared that with the loss of the terms to express it, there has been the loss of the possession itself. But this is our privilege, our certain and glorious privilege; and we are here taught to

pray for it. Let us earnestly seek it, and seek it *by faith.*

3. The inspired apostle leads us further to seek full *establishment in Christian affection,* 'that ye may be rooted and grounded in love.' The metaphor here employed is twofold. One of the general figure, a building—'grounded.' That is, firmly settled on a deep and solid foundation, so that the superstructure rests secure amidst all storms and floods that may beat upon it. The other figure joined to it is that of a tree, which being rooted far down in the earth, and spread abroad under ground, abides under all winds and hurricanes, and still prospers—'rooted.' And the union of these two figures most fittingly expresses what St. Paul designed to set forth—firm and fixed establishment in grace. Observe! the ground and root of rest and nourishment to the believer's soul is said to be *love;* for this grace is the foundation principle of all genuine religion. Without it, as this same apostle shows in his first epistle to the Corinthians, all other possessions are vain and useless. Love is the essential and vital principle of real godliness. And establishment in grace is establishment in love. Growth in grace is advancement in love. Maturity in grace is maturity and perfection in love. It is in love that the believer is rooted and grounded.

There may be here in this double metaphor an allusion to the tree deeply and firmly rooted in the fissures of the rock, and thus held fast under the raging of the storm, and stretching forth its giant arms to brave the fury of the tempest, being in its grounding within the clefts of the rock steadfast and immovable. But whatever may be the allusion, there is

such a state of Christian attainment as that of having our principles so deeply laid and firmly fixed in Christ, the rock of ages, that trials and temptations shall not unsettle or remove us. Paul affirms this in his epistle to the Romans, where, at the close of the eighth chapter, he exclaims, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.' And then most confidently he answers his own question, still more triumphantly, saying, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' The heart, by Scripture teaching, may be established with grace. Not so established that it may be kept without constant watchfulness; and that it can by no possibility be finally overthrown. A state of absolute safety belongs only to heaven. The Church on earth is the Church militant. The Church in heaven only is the Church triumphant. An apostle after having preached to others may himself be a castaway. A righteous man may turn away from his righteousness. The branches of the true vine may from unfruitfulness be cut off and be withered. The salt may lose its savour, and be cast out as worthless, and trodden underfoot of men. But yet, with all this reason to fear, and to watch and pray, there is a sure and settled state of grace and salvation to be attained,

that you may all but positively predicate that it will remain. You seldom know an old established Christian to fall. There is the rooting of a tree, the adherence of the roots to the soil, so that their hold is firm and sure. There is the grounding and settlement of a building which, when compacted and fitly framed, rests with solidity and strength upon the deep foundation, so as to remove all fears of unsafety. And there is the rooting and grounding of a Christian in love, so that he becomes steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Seek this state of grace and salvation; for it is yours through Christ.

4. But strength by the Spirit, inhabitation by the Lord, and establishment in love, do not comprise all the privileges of Christian believers. The apostle in this prayer not only seeks that the spiritual building may be strong, Divinely possessed and firmly grounded; but in his enlarged vision of what the believer may have, he teaches us to pray for an *all-comprehending and experimental knowledge of the love of Christ,* that ye 'may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.' The temple is made strong by the almighty power of the Spirit; Christ dwells in it; the foundation is settled and sure, and now he proceeds to its geometrical proportions of breadth and length, depth and height. How full and extended is this inspired view of Christian privileges! And now the apostle in this passage evidently labours to express what he feels is inexpressible in mortal language, even though raised by inspiration. To know that which he declares to be unknowable. And though he employs these

geometrical terms of breadth and length, depth and height, to convey some sense of the immeasurableness and immensity of the love of Christ, yet he does not really attempt to define the dimensions of that love.

How could he define it? Where would he begin to measure it? Where would he first place the measuring line? Whence would he date the commencement of the love of Christ?—He is 'the Lamb slain,' in the eternal purpose, 'before the foundation of the world.'—And where shall it terminate? It reaches on for ever. What is its breadth? It extends to all mankind, as Pauls exults to contemplate in this, as in other epistles; for Gentiles as well as Jews are fellow heirs and partakers of the salvation of the Gospel. Its breadth, like its length, is unlimited. And what of its depth? It is deeper than the universe, for it was in existence before it. The love of Christ is unfathomable. And what of its height? It reaches to heaven; yea, to co-heirship with Him in His kingdom and throne. Measure the length of eternity; span the breadth of the universe; fathom its depth; and scale the height of heaven, even to the throne of the Saviour, and then, and not till then, say how the love of Christ is to be comprehended in the fulness of its dimensions, and to be measured in its immensity. It cannot. And with Paul you must exclaim, 'O the depth!' With him you must speak of 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' It confessedly 'passeth knowledge.' *It exceeds all instances and examples of love that we have known.* It is love beyond what may be had to a good man, for whom some would even dare to die. It is love to the sinful, the depraved, the rebellious. It is not love for a friend

such as Jonathan's love for David; but love for enemies. Not love passionate and human, expressing itself in exaggerated terms, as in the case of the bereaved father, who went weeping up into his chamber, crying, 'O, Absalom, my son, my son, would to God that I had died for thee!' It is Divine, intelligent, full-meaning love, beyond expression. It is love surpassing the tenderest, strongest, and most unsubduable of all human affections, the love of a mother for her own offspring; for 'she may forget her sucking child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb'; but says Christ, 'I will not forget thee.' It is unknowable. It surpasses all we know and can possibly contemplate. No finite mind can comprehend it, for it is infinite. 'God only knows the love of God.'

> 'Stronger His love than death or hell;
> Its riches are unsearchable;
> The first-born sons of light
> Desire in vain its depths to see,
> They cannot reach the mystery,
> The length, and breadth, and height.'

And yet Divine inspiration proclaims nothing that is *impossible* or *unreasonable.* It does not set before us what we can never attain, simply to dazzle and confound us. And St. Paul, the proficient scholar of the Holy Spirit, and the reliable guide of the Christian, while he speaks of comprehending what is immeasurable and unknowable in its fulness of extent, has a *sentence intervened* in his prayer that makes it rational and reliable in its every term: 'that ye may comprehend with all saints.' Not with *God,* the infinite and eternal Spirit. Not with *angels,* who excel in strength and wisdom, but 'with all *saints*'; that is, as far as

any saints of God ever did, or ever shall comprehend it. As far as human faculties sanctified, possessed, and expanded by the Holy Ghost possibly can know it. And oh, to know the love of Christ as *David* knew it, when his heart was inditing a good matter, and he spoke of the things touching the King! To know the love of Christ as Solomon knew it before his fall, when he wrote his song of songs, and exclaimed, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His.' To know the love of Christ as Isaiah knew it when he wrote the fifty-third chapter of his magnificent prophecy, or when he saw Christ coming up from Edom, glorious in His apparel, sprinkled with blood, and mighty to save. To know it as Martha, Mary and Lazarus knew it at Bethany; as John knew it when he leaned his head upon the Saviour's breast at the last supper. To know it as the apostles knew it in the garden of Gethsemane; on Calvary; in the upper room, where He showed them His hands and his feet; and by the sea of Galilee, where, after toiling all night, hungry and without food, He appeared to them, prepared their meal, and said to them, 'Come and dine.' To know the love of Christ as martyrs knew it in the flames, where His presence made the consuming fires as beds of roses; and as many eminent saints since their time have known it, whose souls glowed like seraphic fires with the intensity of Christ's love. How glorious this knowledge, which may be ours as fully as theirs; for God is no respecter of persons, and we may 'comprehend it with all saints.' Or if the meaning of the apostle was, as some have supposed, that they for whom he prayed might *share* and *participate with all saints living upon earth,* so as to be partakers

with them, to the fullest extent of the knowledge of the love of Christ that it can possibly be comprehended, then the knowledge to be attained is immeasurable and inexpressible. It 'passeth knowledge.' It is beyond what the understanding can comprehend. It is deep, inward, experimental knowledge of the love of Christ. It enters within the inward soul, and pervades all its powers. It is the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and which is felt and enjoyed beyond what can be theoretically or philosophically understood.

5. But the climax of Christian attainment is still before us for contemplation; for the apostle prays further that the believers to whom he wrote might be '*filled with all the fulness of God.*' This is beyond all he had previously expressed, and is what we should not have dared to think of if it had not been taught by inspiration. It is still the same idea of a Christian edifice, probably in allusion to the temple at Jerusalem in which God dwelt, and which, at its dedication by Solomon, He so filled with His Divine presence, 'that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the glory which filled the house of God.' So with regard to the soul of the Christian believer. Paul had prayed that it might be powerfully strengthened by the Spirit, so as to be upheld and supported as the strong walls of a building under all trials and assaults. He had prayed that Christ might dwell within it, as God dwelt between the cherubim in the holy of holies. He had prayed that in its sanctified capacity it might comprehend with all saints the immensity of redeeming love, and know by inward experience what cannot be understood theoretically.

And now, as Solomon kneeled and prayed at the dedication of the temple, when it became filled with the Divine glory, so he, the apostle, bows his knees to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the temple thus raised, strengthened, possessed and extended, may be 'filled with all the fulness of God.' This is an amazing reach of thought and expression. It is, undoubtedly, the greatest of all the great sayings of the apostle; and it is evident that in it even his nervous and powerful language bends under the weight of the Divine idea which he endeavours to express. To be strengthened with the Spirit's might in the inner man is much. To have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith is more. To be rooted and grounded in love is more still. To comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, is still rapturously more. To be filled with God is surpassingly more. To be filled with the fulness of God is abundantly more. But to be filled with *all* the fulness of God, this is a privilege overwhelmingly great for unworthy man, born in sin, and whose breath is in his nostrils.

But *what does it mean?* It cannot mean that the essence and attributes of the Godhead shall be comprised within human souls. That cannot be unless the smaller can comprehend the larger, and finite creature circumscribe the infinite Creator. We cannot expect to be filled with all the fulness of Divine omnipotence, omniscience and eternity. I speak it with awe and reverence, when I say, we cannot expect to be filled with all the fulness of God as our Lord Jesus Christ was in the mysterious and adorable union

of God incarnate. But yet there is a sense, and a deep sense, in which man may be filled with all the fulness of God. There are *three distinct states of salvation* set forth to man in the Gospel. Justification, forgiveness, and acceptance; freedom from guilt and condemnation; inward renewal and purification, or being cleansed from all sin; and spiritual and Divine fulness—being filled with all the fulness of God. Hence the command, 'Be ye filled with the Spirit.' Hence the record of John that from his birth he was filled with the Holy Ghost; of Stephen, that he was 'full of faith and of the Holy Ghost'; and of all the apostles on the day of Pentecost, that 'they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.' And devoted servants of the Lord have experienced the privilege of Divine fulness, since the days of the apostles. The seraphic Fletcher, for instance, who loved the Saviour with intensified affection and delight, said to his devoted and saintly wife, 'I have experienced much of the life and power of God, but never yet all His fulness.' Afterwards he exclaimed exultantly, 'It is come! and at length God has given me all His fulness that I asked for!' Good John Howe testified the same, and said that he was so filled with love and joy that he knew not how to live. And we have seen holy, joyful saints, so full of God, that not only had His sanctifying presence softened all the harsher lines and features in the countenance, moulded them into sweetness and love, and made their faces to shine with goodness; but we have seen their very bodies shake and tremble with the weight of glory which filled their souls. Like Fletcher of whom we have spoken, they have been ready to cry out, 'Lord, stay Thy hand, or the vessel

will break.' But like him, they have learned that He can enlarge the vessel and fill it—enlarge it and fill it. And thus it will be to eternity; so that the soul will never reach a limit of blessedness not to be exceeded. God can in eternity, as in time,

> 'Enlarge our faith's capacity,
> Wider, and yet wider still;
> Then, with all that is in Him
> Our souls for ever fill.'

How sublimely great and glorious this privilege of being filled with all the fulness of God. To be filled with God is to be filled with light; for God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. It is a principle acknowledged in natural science that what is most pure and refined is the most penetrating and pervading. Fire is a finer substance than water, and will penetrate where water will not flow. Light is the most subtle, and refined, and the most pervading of all substances that we are acquainted with. Open the windows and in an instant it fills the room, and pervades every part of it. God is light; and He is the Father of spirits, and can fill them with its spiritual presence and glory to their utmost capacity, with all His fulness. God is love. And how the fire of love burns through all the powers of the soul, where it is pure and ardent! Fire penetrates the substance,—the bright shining steel,—until you say the metal is all fire. No it is not, as you find when the metal has cooled, and yet seems scarcely less than it was before. God is love; and penetrates, fills and enflames all the devoted believer's purified passions. 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' To be filled with God is to be filled with consolation, peace

and joy; for He is the God of consolation, the God of peace, and the unfailing source of blissful enjoyment. To be filled with all the fulness of God is, indeed, heaven upon earth. It is to 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' But we must cease to speak directly of this high privilege; for thought and speech both exhaust themselves in the feeble endeavour to conceive and to express the deep things of God.

II. Let us proceed to survey *the certain ground of assurance upon which we may rest our unwavering confidence for the fulfilment of our most enlarged petitions*, viz., *the all-sufficiency of God*; for, says the apostle. 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the power which worketh in us.'

St. Paul knew the natural unbelief of the human heart, and how Satan would be ready to suggest to the weak and doubting believer that such great and unspeakable blessings as were thus prayed for were beyond what God could and would bestow on a feeble human being. He, therefore, meets this evil suggestion by declaring that the Divine Being would give abundantly more than he had expressed or thought of. As in another case, where he had prayed for the Thessalonians that they might be sanctified wholly, throughout body, soul and spirit, and be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord, he adds immediately, to silence all doubt and unbelief, 'Faithful is He who hath called you, who also will do it.' And so here, he affirms the all-sufficiency of God to check all fear and unbelief, saying, 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.'

He can do *all that we ask.* What can we ask from Him? We can ask all that the apostle here teaches us to pray for. We can take this inspired form of prayer, and pass through it section after section. We can ask for the Spirit's might to strengthen us in our inner man; for the constant and abiding presence of Christ in our hearts; for full establishment in grace; for all-comprehensive knowledge of the love of Christ; and to be filled with all the fulness of God. Then we may receive the assurance that God can do all that we ask. Yea, we may take all the prayers of Scripture, all the prayers of Moses, Elijah, David, Solomon, Daniel, Paul, Peter. We may take our Lord's prayer in its several and advancing petitions. We may take all the prayers we would offer for pardon, peace, renewal, consolation, strength, protection, sanctification, Divine fulness, heaven and everlasting glory; and yet no language we employ can exceed God's power to bestow; for He can do all that we ask.

He can do *all that we think.* Thought is more subtile and refined than speech. Thought is the spirit, and language is the body; and thought travels and soars, and pierces to heights and depths that cannot be expressed. Consider what you have thought in your highest contemplations of Christ, of holiness, love and heaven, when you have bowed before the Lord and like the angels desired to look into the mysteries of redemption, and have trembled before the mercy-seat in an ecstasy of love. How your quickened and exulting mind glanced forward in its desires! and like the thirsting hart you panted and cried aloud for the water-brook: You never in a single instance sur-

passed by thought God's ability to bless—for He can do all that we think.

Yea, we have never yet *reached* in language or even thought God's ability to bless us, for He can do *more* than we can ask or think; He can do *abundantly* more; yea, further still, He can do *exceeding* abundantly more. What a combination of language! And yet it is not the mere glitter of rhetoric, the mere show of words. The declaration is divinely inspired, so that there is no exaggeration in it. There is truth and soberness in it; for there is an infinite fulness in God which surpasses all our finite measures of thought and expression. 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we *can* ask or think.'

He has already given *proof* of this in our own experience as Christian believers, 'According to the power that worketh in us.' For if God has quickened us from the death of trespasses and sins, and made us new creatures in Christ Jesus; if He has converted and saved us; preserved us amidst innumerable temptations as monuments of His grace, surely we may believe in Him for all we may ask, and think, and for more than we can reach in the utmost extent of our prayers and desires. And *others* have experienced and testified of His ability to do exceeding abundantly above all man asks or thinks. Did He not exceed in actual blessing all that *Abraham* thought of, even when he was assured that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed? Did He not exceed the thoughts of *Jacob*, concerning reception by Esau, and the recovery of Joseph? 'I had not thought to see thy face,' said Jacob to Joseph, 'and God hath shewed me thy seed also.' Did not the Lord exceed

the thoughts of *David* when, after being hunted like a partridge upon the mountain, and standing solitary in exile as the pelican in the wilderness, he was made king over Israel? So with *Daniel, Hezekiah, Paul, Silas, Peter* and others we might name. So with *Martin Luther* and the Reformation. So with your *Fathers in Methodism.* Yea, so with *ourselves;* for God in His bountifulness, and out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, has often surpassed all our thoughts. Let us not, then, doubt His ability to bless us even with all His fulness; for 'He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'

III. And now let us learn to *ascribe the honour and praise of all the blessings we receive to Him who so graciously and abundantly bestows them upon us.* 'Unto Him,' says the apostle, 'be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.'

It is evident that St. Paul wrote this concluding ascription with deep and profound reverence of feeling. His confidence in God is strong, but not presumptuous and heady. It is full of solemn awe, becoming a human creature writing of the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity. 'Unto *Him* be glory.' Mark the suppression of the name, more expressive than if he had written it at full length. As where it is written, 'Fear *Him* who hath power to destroy both body and soul in hell, yea, I say unto you, fear *Him.*' 'I know *Him* in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.' So in the text, the suppression of the name, and the employment of

the personal pronoun denotes solemn awe and reverence in the mind of the writer, and is powerfully impressive.

'Unto Him be *glory*.' That is praise, honour, adoration—the grateful and joyful acknowledgment of all power and goodness. 'In the *Church*'; that is, in the assembly of Christian believers, wherever it may be found. Yea, the Church comprises the saints of every name, of every age, of every region, both of earth and heaven. '*By Christ Jesus*.' For He is not only the filial bond uniting all the children or families of God in heaven and earth; but He is the appointed medium of acceptable worship, both of praise and prayer. He is the Great High Priest who takes much incense from the golden altar, puts it into His golden censer, where, by mingling His own infinite merit as sweet perfume with the offerings of His people, He renders them fragrant and acceptable. 'Throughout all ages'; or as it might be freely rendered 'Throughout the generation of ages,' 'the eternity of eternities.' That is, for ever and ever. And the man who has begun to praise God in the Church on earth, has commenced an eternal theme. He has begun a song that shall never end; for when he ceases to sing on earth, he shall find his spirit attuned to the same theme on a loftier key; and then with the Church triumphant above, his freed and glorified spirit shall shout praise, and honour, and glory, and riches, and blessing unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Who is not ready now to add the solemn affirmation with which this grand ascription of praise concludes—'Amen?' Let it be so. Let glory be given to Him in the Church, by Christ Jesus,

world without end. Who will not add the solemn affirmation which belongs to all; for amen is the people's own litany—'And let all the people say amen.'

I add only one general observation to the reflections made and applied as we have passed through our subject, and it is this: What Christians we should be if we comprehended the fulness of our privileges as did the apostle St. Paul! If instead of doubting and fearing under the sense of our weakness and unworthiness we fixed our earnest gaze upon the exceeding precious promises of the Gospel, until their wealth of meaning penetrated our minds, and until their strength and fulness moved and governed our hearts, what a mighty change would soon be accomplished within us! How is it that Christians of the present day are so far below the apostolic standard? It is because we fail to comprehend fully the truth, that our possible attainments in Christian holiness are not to be measured by our own weakness and unworthiness, but by God's power and ability to bless. And failing thus to comprehend what God is able and willing to do for us, we fail to pray and believe for the fulness of grace which, if received, would transform us into shining examples of holiness, and efficient instruments in blessing and converting mankind. Let us awake, before this prayer of the apostle, to a sense of our exalted and abundant privileges, and let us seek in faith and prayer that fulness of blessing which is here expressed. And *let the unregenerate reflect upon their spiritual destitution,* and see in the presence of this abundant good to be sought and obtained by the people of God how naked and

poor they are while out of Christ, and unpossessed of His great salvation. Preparation for heaven is not so light and easy as some persons suppose. There needs *fitness* for it. Death *makes no moral change.*

X.

THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT.

'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'

COLOSSIANS i. 12.

VARIOUS are the views under which heaven is represented to us in the Scriptures. Sometimes it is represented to us as a *state*, and sometimes as a *place;* and in both these general representations, the most joyous, attractive and exciting images are employed to set it forth. *Life* is precious to us above all things; and heaven is eternal life. It is continuous, happy, unending existence. *Social companionship* and association, is the natural and earnest desire of man. It is not good for him to be alone; and by intercourse and fellowship with kindred and congenial friends, he increases and multiplies his enjoyments. And heaven is the place of social happiness. There they sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. There with the redeemed of all nations, they feast in the presence of Christ at the wedding supper of eternity.

Rich, lovely *scenery*, and goodly, substantial *cities*, are attractive to mankind. And heaven is paradise, with its bright, flowing river, the trees with all manner of fruits, its fountains of living waters. And it is Jerusalem, the city of our God, which lieth foursquare,

with walls of jasper, foundations of precious stones, gates of pearl, and streets of gold, in which the nations of the saved walk, and in which they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. A *kingdom*, with its sovereign state and dominion; with its victorious subjects, and with its honours and rewards, kindles human ambition, and draws forth human desires to their utmost strength; and heaven is a kingdom of unparalleled magnificence and extent, in which the crowned victors exult together before the throne.

Now all this variety of representation of heaven is not for the sake of mere gratification of taste, but it has its practical use and value. It is *instructive*. It supplies to us information which we could not otherwise receive. Much of it, of course, is figurative allusion; but in exhibiting to us heaven under a variety of lights and aspects, it affords us glimpses of that heavenly state which St. John, with all the celestial visions which descended to him at Patmos, has said, 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be'; and which St. Paul, with all the unutterable words he heard in the third heaven, has declared to be inconceivable by the heart of man. And this variety of representation also *meets the variety of human temperament* and human *condition*. Now the poor overwrought labourer, and the poor black slave, must appreciate the view of heaven in the Scriptures, as a state of perfect and everlasting repose, where 'the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are for ever at rest.' Robert Hall, who suffered continuously from acute bodily pain, said to Wilberforce, 'My chief conception of heaven is *rest*'; 'And mine,' said the great philanthropist, who delighted in God and in human

welfare, 'is *love*—love to God, and love to every bright and holy inhabitant of that glorious place.'

In the text the heavenly state is presented to us in another variety of aspect, which is at once instructive and attractive; viz., that of a glorious and unalienable inheritance, for which we are prepared and fitted by the grace and bounty of our heavenly Father; and therefore for which inheritance and for which preparation we are justly called upon to give thanks unto Him. 'Giving thanks unto the Father,' says St. Paul, in his large-hearted overflowing style of expression, 'which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Let us this morning apply ourselves to the consideration of this delightfully instructive passage, by inquiring: First, into the character of that heavenly inheritance, of which God's people are made the partakers; and, Secondly, into the nature of that meetness by which the Divine Being prepares them for the possession and enjoyment of that inheritance. And in all our inquiries let the spirit of devout and grateful acknowledgment of our obligations to the Father of mercies direct and govern us, so that the sentiment of the text, as well as its meaning, may be found with us—'*Giving thanks* unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.'

I. Then we inquire into the character of that heavenly inheritance which is in reserve for the people of God. It is 'the inheritance of the saints in light.'

We all know what is meant by the term *inheritance*. It is property possessed and held by succession, through descent or relationship. It is not property earned by labour, or won by valour per-

sonally, but inherited from predecessors. And in the most common application of the term it means an ample estate possessed by the son or nearest relative of the original proprietor. To be heir to an inheritance does not require personal service or prowess. The wailing infant in the nurse's arms may be the rightful heir to the largest estate, which its father won by courageous battle, and which he has bequeathed or made over to his firstborn son. And heaven is not an inheritance obtained by merit, but by grace, by the adopted children and heirs of God, and is a large, honourable and everlasting possession, secured to them by the sufferings and death of the triumphant Redeemer. It is an inheritance surpassing any earthly inheritance, however great and valuable. It surpasses all kingdoms and countries that the sons of kings may inherit. It surpasses Canaan, the chosen type of the heavenly inheritance, and which God himself gave as an inheritance to Abraham and his seed; and it is as pure and durable as it is great and valuable; for it is an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.

The special characteristic of this heavenly inheritance is that it is in *light*. This is in accordance with all the views given us of heaven. It is a bright and shining place. It is a place of splendour and of luminous glory. It is not a dull, heavy, opaque abode, like earth, but of brilliant magnificence. It is a place of no darkness, no night, and where there is no need of the sun nor of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. It surpasses in its brilliancy our noonday luminary, and is indescribably

radiant. It is the inheritance of the saints *in light.* It has no spot of darkness upon it, and no clouds overhanging and shadowing it. It is all in bright, shining splendour; where the saints inherit *glory* itself. But there are three primary meanings of the term light as it is used in the Scriptures in reference to heaven, that we may notice in our endeavour to unfold the signification of the text.

1. One is *purity.* Light is the Scripture emblem of this, and darkness is the Scripture emblem of sin, its opposite. Light is the fairest and purest of all earthly things; if, indeed, that can be called earthly which comes from heaven. It is the parent of beauty, and seems almost to create what it reveals. Without it what a dungeon of gloom and misery would this world be! And there is also this quality in light, that while in itself it is incapable of defilement, it exposes pollution and loathsomeness wherever it shines upon them. It is pure in itself, and it is the enemy and exposer of impurity. So it is a fit emblem of purity, as employed in the Scriptures. Hence men who live in sin are styled children of darkness, and men who devote themselves to God, and obey Him, are described as children of light, and of the day. Acts of sin are called 'deeds of darkness,' and the graces and virtues of holiness are set forth as the armour of light. The rule and dominion of sin is named 'the power of darkness,' and Christ, the Deliverer and Saviour of mankind, is announced as 'the light of the world.' Sin covets darkness. It conceals itself under its cover, and is afraid to come to the light lest its deeds should be reproved. They that be drunken are drunken in the night. The

adulterer waiteth for the twilight. Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.

But holiness lives and walks in the light. It is its element and delight. And so heaven is the abode of light. It is its seat, its source. There shall be no night there. Nothing shall enter that defileth, or that maketh a lie. No spot, no cloud of impurity, shall be found there. It is the land, the region, the inheritance of light. All there are holy. The place is holy. The inhabitants are holy. The angels are holy angels. The saved of the Lord are the spirits of just men made perfect in holiness. God is holy. The ascriptions of praise are Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! The employments of heaven are holy; they serve Him day and night in His temple. And from the Father of lights in the midst shall holiness be reflected, in all its purity and beauty, upon all in heaven, arraying them in light as with a garment, and in white robes they shall follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth. What an inheritance for God's people! How different to the elysium of the Greeks and Romans; to the paradise of Mahomet; and to the fanciful regions of modern pagans. Their future inheritances are all earthly, sensual and devilish. They are sinfulness perpetuated and made immortal. But this is spiritual, unearthly and divine! It is 'the inheritance of the saints in light.'

2. Further, light is the acknowledged emblem of *knowledge*. Darkness covers and hides from view what exists, but light reveals it. Hence 'darkness' is said, in reference to heathenish ignorance, to have covered the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people. But 'whatsoever doeth make manifest,'

saith the apostle, 'is light.' Heaven is the place of clear and open knowledge. Here we see as through a glass darkly. The medium of sight is not transparent, but in itself darkening. But there we shall see without any intervening medium at all. We shall see face to face, and the sight shall be full and perfect. We shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known. How glorious an inheritance of light shall that be! All light! No darkness! No obscurity resting on anything; but all clear and open in more than midday sunshine. How many of our circumstances here are inexplicable; and the ways of God with man are inscrutable. But there we shall know the reasons and ends of all; for 'what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.' Here we search the Scriptures, but many things in them are unreachable by our utmost stretches of thought and investigation. But there shall not only this book of revelation be all made plain to us; but further and higher revelations, of which this blessed book is only the first page or section, shall then be made plain to us. Here, like the emblematic angels with piercing gaze and outstretched wings covering the mercy seat, we desire to look into the mysteries of redemption; but we cannot penetrate them, and we exclaim, 'O the depth!' But there we shall see not only the sufferings of Christ, but also the glory that shall follow.

Oh I know not what heights of knowledge of various kinds may be attained there. I know not whether philosophy shall take her seat in heaven; science explain her mysteries, and taste exhibit her chambers of imagery. This we may say, that as truth is the food of the soul, which it eagerly and rejoicingly

receives, truth in all things will there be manifest. Light on all subjects which the mind of man can contemplate will shine clearly and radiantly, so that there will in heaven be truth without any mixture of error. But the highest truth that man can know is God in Christ. 'This is life eternal, that we may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' And in heaven God, the triune God, shall be known beyond anything that can be learned of Him on earth. Here, as Hooker has eloquently observed, 'Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High; whom, although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not, as indeed He is, neither, indeed, can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him, when we confess without confession, that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach.'

We shall never fully know God. The finite shall never reach the infinite. But we shall know so much more of Him in heaven, and increasingly we shall know Him, so as to make that inheritance an inheritance in light. Glorious inheritance! A region of knowledge—of open truth. A region where knowledge shall be bright and joyous as sunshine. Where knowledge shall not be obtained by painful and exhausting labour, requiring nights of cessation and relief, and where the mind consumes itself by emitting sparks. No there shall be no painful processes there; no uncertain conclusions; no loss of knowledge; no wane of intelligence; no 'dark ages,' but everlasting light.

3. Again light is significant of *activity, gladness* and *joy*. Darkness is the emblem of sleep, of sorrow and distress, but light represents wakefulness, alacrity and delight. In the heavenly inheritance, all will be activity and joyfulness. We reject the poet's heaven of luxuriant indolence. It is not in accordance with the revelations of Scripture, or the instincts of goodness. It may suit a lazy bard, like the author of the Castle of Indolence, to represent the saints in heaven, reposing on sunny banks, by meandering streams, and within shadowing groves; but that is not what the Bible represents, or what they would have who desire to do the will of God with angelic speed and freeness. To rest on sunny banks, or in flowery groves, even with harp in hand, would require no wings; but the angels have six wings. Activity, ardour and constancy in service which requires no cessation—no night—is what the holy and the good desire; and the inheritance of the saints shall supply this: it shall be *in light*.

Nor shall there be any darkness of *mourning* or *sorrow* there. Darkness here is the emblem of sorrow. It is the chosen sign and badge of distress and bereavement. Sorrow courts the shade, which seems to sympathise with it. It desires the night for concealed weeping. We darken our dwellings at the entrance of death, and we array ourselves in dark clothing when bereft of our friends. But gladness and joy seek the light. They expand and exult amidst bright sunshine, and when the day no longer affords the congenial element, they kindle their imitative fires, and illumine their halls with dazzling brilliancy. And how often in our present life is darkness, rather than

light, the true emblem of our condition! We have darkness in personal affliction and trouble; darkness in family sorrows and bereavements; darkness in national visitations, and in the trials that come upon the Church. And though we have many mercies and benefits to rejoice in, yet we have no unbroken unclouded light in this world. At the best our life on earth is a chequered scene. Darkness is mixed with light. Clouds overcast our sky, and throw their sombre shadows upon us. Our gourds wither. Our mountains fall to nought. Our friends die. But there all is light—unbroken, unclouded light. There are no losses of possessions, no sickness, no pain, no death.

There no youth, with hopes extinguished, sighs, 'Lover and friend Thou hast hid far from me, and my companion in darkness.' There no voice of lamentation exclaims, 'I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.' There no broken-hearted sister goes to the grave to weep. There no Rachel weeps for her children. There no Jacob shakes his grey hairs, and says, 'Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, I will go mourning all my days.' There all is gladness and rejoicing. 'In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' There in that heavenly inheritance is a rich, abundant harvest of light and happiness. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' There shall be no alternate states of light and darkness, day and night. 'Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.' As to gladness, unbroken and unend-

ing joy, it shall be 'the inheritance of the saints in light.' Other thoughts suggest themselves under this bright and luminous emblem of heaven; but we pass to the second and most important inquiry upon the text; viz.,

II. Into the nature of that meetness by which our heavenly Father prepares His children for their inheritance in light.

For there is a personal qualification and fitness spoken of in the text which is essential. There is a relative qualification and title to the heavenly state, expressed in the term inheritance itself. It is an inheritance assigned to children and heirs, as also the term 'Father' in the text denotes. This inheritance is for the sons and daughters of God only; for such as are begotten and born of God. And no alien to God—no stranger, no unregenerate person—shall be a partaker of the heavenly inheritance. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' But with this relative qualification and title, there must be personal *meetness* and *preparedness*. There must be dispositions, tastes and attainments suited to the place. This must be evident to every considerate mind; for to satisfaction and enjoyment in any station, or place, there must be congeniality of desires and pursuits with what the place affords. It is so with earth. How wonderfully is man with his organs and powers fitted to the world in which he is. How wonderful the adaptation of his eye to the light that falls upon it; the construction of his ear to the sounds that enter it; the poising of his body to the attitude he bears; and the functions and joints of his limbs to the acts and exercises he has to perform. But suppose

him translated as he is to another planet, where the properties and laws of light and sound and gravitation were altogether different to what they are here, see you not that in his unpreparedness for that place what would be glad and joyous to the natural inhabitants of the planet would be disquietude and misery to him. Light to him unfitted to his eye would be darkness; music and harmony to ears tuned for the state would be discord; and balance for uprightness for others would be prostration to him. Meetness for any place is necessary to its enjoyment.

Take another illustration. Suppose an ignorant debased savage brought into civilised society; and he who has had no education brought professedly for enjoyment into a richly stored library; and he whose occupation and training have been that of open-air feats of daring and cruelty introduced into drawing-room circles of refined life, would he, think you, find enjoyment there? He might gaze with wonder upon the strange scenes before him, but could he associate himself in ease and happiness with them? Would he not sigh for the chase, the war dance, and the scalping feats? Have we not known this to be so, in fact, where attempts have been made to civilise before Christianising savages? Or suppose a case that comes nearer to ourselves, and that we shall most of us have known personally at one time or other of life. Suppose a low-minded, ignorant rustic, of drunken and debased habits, suddenly made the heir of a large and extensive inheritance, where he goes to reside among nobles and princes of fortune, who are at least observant of the forms of good-breeding and outward propriety. Will his new position be congenial to

him? Will the society be attractive? Will he not soon shun refined and courtly associations. For happiness there must be congeniality of dispositions and pursuits. There must be meetness; and the most abject, filthy outcast in our streets, ushered suddenly into a princely banquet, and seated in his polluted rags among the highest nobility of the land, would not be more out of place than a sinner admitted to the heavenly inheritance without meetness in a renewed and holy spirit for it. Heaven is the inheritance of the saints—of holy, sanctified persons—in light.

What, for instance, would the drunkard or the glutton do in heaven, where there is no indulgence of bodily appetites? What would the sensual man do in heaven, where there is no carnal intercourse, but all are as the angels of God? What the covetous man, whose thoughts and desires are all buried in heaps of gold and in houses and lands? What the envious, proud and ambitious, where the highest would gladly wait on the lowliest and where there is no strife for place or power? What would the gay thoughtless lovers of pleasure do in heaven, where there is no butterfly adornment—no pride and pastime? Yea, what would the ungodly man do, who does not call the Sabbath a delight, and who accounts the service of the sanctuary long and wearisome? Would he have enjoyment in the keeping of an eternal Sabbath, in serving God day and night in His temple? Dream not of heaven without fitness—without meetness for it. Without this heaven would be to you a dreary waste. Without congeniality in thought and feeling with its inhabitants, and without tastes and dispositions for its scenes and exercises, it would be worse

to you than a lonely island. In one sense it would be worse than hell. And like the owl or bat, that shuns the light and hides itself in darkness, so would you prefer darkness to light. Judas went to 'his own place'—the place for which by his evil dispositions of covetousness and treachery he was fitted, and to which by nature he belonged; and between the *states* of eternity, as well as between the places, a great gulf is fixed, across which no human spirit shall ever pass. He that is unjust shall be unjust still, and he that is filthy shall be filthy still. Let all who desire heaven and think of going thither prepare for it. Let all ponder the words of Christ, 'Ye must be born again.'

And let the children of God, to whom I more especially address myself this morning, consider this truth, and be duly influenced by it—that there must be personal meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. There must be preparedness by qualification in dispositions and attainments, as well as by title, for it. There must in this be the same spiritual tastes and desires that there shall be in the next. The teaching of Scripture is that the spiritual life of heaven is begun on earth. That the same principles direct and govern the saint here that shall govern him hereafter. That the great laws of heart and spirit that rule man in this world shall rule him in the world to come. It is not that a radical change shall pass upon him at death, so that he shall then be wholly different to what he has been; but that he shall then pass into the fulness, the fruition of his being. He that hath the Son *hath* life. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away;

behold, all things are become new. The germ of the heavenly life is now within the child of God, and hereafter it shall open out and unfold itself with blissful immortality. The dawn of heaven is now upon the soul, and it shall continue to brighten even unto perfect day. The child of God is born from above, but here on earth he is in his minority. In heaven he shall have the possessions of heirship, and have his everlasting inheritance. The same dispositions, desires and pursuits then that the saints shall have in heaven they will have on earth. Heaven to them is a change of place, but not of state. They were spiritual and holy on earth, and they will be spiritual and holy in heaven. So that meetness for heaven is to be attained in this life. Death cannot accomplish it. Death is a physical and not a moral change. Corruption and dissolution—the separation of the soul from the body—cannot purify man.

And it is a solemn but a certain truth that we must be as holy when we die as when we enter heaven, for no purifying process shall be upon us in the midway passage between earth and heaven. See you not then the necessity of care and diligence in the Divine life, so that we may have the meetness required. See you not that there must be the careful separation of ourselves from all evil, and the entire consecration of ourselves to the service of God—that we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord? See you not that there must be the cultivation of spiritual graces and heavenly dispositions, if we would grow in grace, and if we would leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ and go on to perfection? See you not that

by daily exercise there must be the drawing out of heavenly desires and affections, if we are to be ready for their full development in the eternal world? Maturity in love is not obtained in a day. It is not by a sudden flash of affection that we become perfect in it, so as to say, 'As God is so are we in this life.' Heavenly-mindedness is not attained without habitual contemplation of heavenly things. Meetness for the heavenly inheritance is not attained without diligence in a devout and holy life. We do not mean by these remarks that man shall ever in himself be worthy of heaven; but we mean that by the power and grace of God he shall be prepared and qualified for it. It is not something yet to be done, but something already accomplished. Yes, the very God of peace can sanctify us wholly. Man may be so fitted and prepared for heaven that he shall be meet in character, in thought, in feeling and desires for it; so that on entering it he shall find all things congenial with his feelings and desires. And this maturity of Christian character and meetness for heaven is attained by man's co-operation with God. He works out his salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who worketh in him to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

Let this subject strengthen our *desire* for heaven. We are now in our minority, and have not come to man's estate. Yonder is our portion and inheritance. Surely we ought to be looking for it. Our conversation should be in heaven. Our affections should be set upon it. We ought to be waiting with joyful anticipation for the call to depart and possess it. I do not mean that we should be insensible to earthly

ties and relationships. In our present constitution we are formed for earth, and for earthly associations; and to leave friends and kindred without a sigh, and to leave the body in which we have lived, and suffered, and rejoiced, and to be unclothed, is not in accordance with man's nature. A good man may be allowed to weep at the last earthly farewell to wife and children; and the spirit of the saint may be allowed to shiver as it stands naked at the brink of the bitter flood, though it is assured that it will emerge from it with renewed life and vigour. The saint's hope of heaven does not destroy his love of kindred, or love of life. Nor does it make him impatient to begone. Impatience to leave the world is sometimes more of nature than grace. It is simply nature groaning after shelter and rest, and not grace seeking consummation in glory.

But when the desire for heaven is that the soul may be free from impurity with Christ, and to enjoy more intimate communion with God, then it is legitimate and honourable. 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ,' said the apostle, 'which is far better.' And the heavenly-minded saint has seasons when he has such desires. When the soul mounts up on high in heavenly contemplations, like the messenger bird, which before it hastens to its home soars upwards to survey its course, and wheels round as if trying the freedom and strength of its wings, so the saint of the Lord has foresights and foretastes of the heavenly inheritance. Like Moses, he ascends Mount Nebo to view the land of promise before he departs, and sometimes the joys of anticipation are inexpressible. Mists and vapours may have been around the soul for years, perhaps, as in the case of Cowper, through physical

or mental infirmity. But at eventide it is light. The fogs and vapour clear off, the light of the heavenly inheritance streams down upon the soul, and it rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. How many have so triumphed, and among them some of our own kindred. Good John Howe once had such a view of heaven and such a desire to depart that he said to his wife: 'Though I love you as well as it is fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to me to die this moment, or live for seven years longer, I would choose to die this moment.' And others have sung in earnest sincerity:

> 'O would He more of heaven bestow,
> And let the vessel break,
> And let our ransomed spirits go
> To grasp the God we seek;
> In rapturous awe on Him to gaze
> Who bought the sight for me;
> And shout and wonder at His grace,
> Through all eternity!'

And then this prospect of the heavenly inheritance, with the preparatory *meetness* for it, ought to kindle ardent *gratitude* within us. This the apostle sets forth in the text: 'Giving thanks to the Father, &c.' Yes, all is of God. We have no goodness in ourselves, and without Him we could not be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. It is He that works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. It is He who has prepared a place for us. It is in our Father's house that there are many mansions. Then while working out our salvation with fear and trembling let us give thanks to the Father of all mercies, saying, 'Not unto us, not unto us, but

unto Thy name be all the glory.' If gratitude for present privileges becomes us, what is required of us when we think of everlasting glory in the world to come. Brethren, there is no gratitude for blessings that ought to surpass in intensity and fervour the gratitude of the saint with the prospect of the heavenly inheritance. The gratitude of the prodigal forgiven and accepted by a rejoicing father; the gratitude of the slave set free from bondage, and invested with the rights and dignity of a man; and the gratitude of a criminal released from the sentence of death, and restored to his rejoicing family. All this is poor—yea, is beggarly, if I may so express myself—compared with the gratitude which ought to possess and influence the children of God in the prospect of their heavenly inheritance. And if all the sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty now present were to burst forth in one loud song of thanks to the Father, who hath given them an inheritance among them that are sanctified, and were to make this place echo with their praise, it would not be adequate as a proportionate expression of obligation to the Divine Being for the prospect of eternal life. We suppress the song, but we cherish the gratitude that it may kindle and burn within us with an intense flame, and until we shall go to shout and praise before the throne. In the meantime we give thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

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